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# Leader vows revenge for Gen. Soleimani's martyrdom

## #HardRevenge



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**EDITORIAL**  
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**Soleimani was a  
“culture” and a  
culture cannot be  
assassinated**

At 1:20 a.m., several U.S. helicopters and drones attacked two Poplar Mobilization Units vehicles near an airport in Iraq that led to the martyrdom of Commander Qassem Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes and nine of PMU forces.

U.S. terrorist forces claimed the responsibility of the strike, increasing their flights over Baghdad's sky hours earlier, seizing its air space and violating the Iraqi sovereignty.

The American terrorists, who have the blood of millions of people in the world on their hands, assassinated General Soleimani, in the hope of getting rid of their nightmares. They should know that Soleimani was not a person, rather a culture based on resistance, defending the oppressed, and roughly confronting international terrorism.

The culture has originated from the uprising of Imam Hussain (A.S.) on the day of Ashura. As the nightmares of villainous Yazid did not end by shedding Imam Hussain's blood and his caliphate was not stabilized, the Yazidis' nightmare in the White House will not end and will speed up their collapse.

The stupid American leaders assumed that they can defeat the axis of resistance by assassinating General Soleimani. They martyred a commander, who was a sincere soldier in the God's path and loved by the oppressed people all around the world, and further stained their history, ignoring the fact that the “culture and ideology of resistance” cannot be assassinated.

The resistance movement against tyranny and arrogance has not been stopped with the assassination of former commanders in Iran, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Syria and it will not be terminated this time either.

The horrific assassination of commander Soleimani by the U.S. is a clear sign of the decline and collapse of the flimsy world power and will trigger new moves, so that the enemies' nightmare has aggravated due to the fear of “harsh revenge”. ➔13

## Trump may have given Iran an unintended assist

By Martin Love

**NORTH CAROLINA** — What with all the recent movements and protests in Baghdad around the U.S. embassy in the Green Zone resulting from the U.S. attacks on elements of Iraq's and Syria's national defenses, and then the blame game against Iran, it's no wonder that confusion reigns. And in Iraq the confusion is bleeding with U.S. attacks on Hashd al-Sha'abi (officially a part of the Iraqi army) positions and personnel in Baghdad and elsewhere. As of Friday morning the U.S. is only becoming more despised in Iraq and the situation there is explosive.

The Trump Administration seems unable to grasp the fact that the Iraqis who stormed the embassy perimeters were just flat angry at the slaughter of some two dozen of their soldiers or militia, the very people who had

helped rid the country of most of ISIS and who, at least, seemed to have assisted the U.S. in this task. Hasn't that been the stated reason the U.S. troops are in Iraq, to help clean out the foreign terrorists? What, in fact, really accounts for the presence or reintroduction of roughly 5000 U.S. troops in Iraq a while back? It is or has become apparent that this was probably a lie, and observers know that over the past years there have been many instances of the U.S. actually shielding, funding and supplying ISIS and other terrorists not just in Iraq but in Syria, too, even if the U.S. at times also occasionally attacked ISIS.

But first one must address the anger at the U.S. now, and what is MOST remarkable is the failure of the U.S. time and again the understand why the Iraqi parliament may finally

be obliged vote on whether to try to eject the U.S. military altogether. The anger now is cumulative, it seems. George H.W. Bush almost 30 years ago pushed Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. An estimated 200,000 Iraqi citizens died. In the 1990's sanctions murdered some 500,000 Iraqi children, and then in 2003 George W. Bush invaded the country and murdered at least a million citizens and destroyed the country's infrastructure. The attacks this past week, allegedly because a single U.S. contractor died because of a missile attack from an as yet unknown source, just added gross insult to gross injury, and may have created a long-delayed tipping point. It has to be one of the most perplexing questions of this century: why Iraq has not for the past decade at least demanded a U.S. exit and the closure of the monstrous embassy in Baghdad? ➔7

## U.S. oil workers leaving Iraq after air strike

World reacts to U.S. killing of Iran's Qassem Soleimani in Iraq

Dozens of U.S. citizens working for foreign oil companies in the southern Iraqi oil city of Basra were leaving the country on Friday, the Oil Ministry said, after a U.S. air strike killed a top Iranian commander in Iraq.

The U.S. embassy in Baghdad urged all its citizens to leave Iraq immediately, hours after the U.S. killed Iranian Quds Force leader Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Iraqi officials said the evacuation would not affect operations, production or exports.

■ **Pompeo says U.S. strike in response to imminent attack**

A U.S. air strike in Baghdad that killed a top Iranian commander aimed to disrupt an “imminent attack” that would have endangered Americans in the Middle East, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in television interviews on Friday.

Pompeo, in interviews on Fox News and CNN, declined to discuss many details of the alleged threat but said it was “an intelligence based assessment” that drove the U.S. decision to target Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's elite Quds Force.

“He was actively plotting in the region to take actions — a big action as he described

it — that would have put dozens if not hundreds of American lives at risk. We know it was imminent,” Pompeo told CNN.

“These were threats that were located in the region,” Pompeo added. “Last night was the time that we needed to strike to make sure that this imminent attack ... was disrupted.”

Pompeo said the United States remains committed to de-escalation with Iran but will defend itself. He added that the United States has fortified its assets in the region and is prepared for any possible retaliation, including a cyberattack. ➔13

## Iranians hold rallies, urging revenge for Soleimani assassination

**TEHRAN** — Hundreds of thousands of Iranians, angry over the assassination of IRGC Quds Force Chief Major General Qassem Soleimani, held rallies across the country on Friday urging revenge for his death.

General Soleimani was martyred in a U.S. air strike on Baghdad's international airport on Friday morning. The Pentagon announced that President Trump had ordered the attack on Soleimani.

The angry marchers shouted “death to America”, strongly condemning the state terrorism. ➔13



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**ARTICLE**  
**Syed Zafar Mehdi**  
Journalist  
from New Delhi

**We are all Soleimani today**

Last year, while felicitating him with the country's highest honor, the Supreme Leader Sayed Ali Khamenei wished martyrdom for his brave soldier, Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force. On the blessed night of Friday, the wish came true and the 'living martyr' bade us adieu.

I always took pride in writing about this revolutionary warrior of Islam, who singlehandedly took on the 'gangsters' of the world from Washington to Tel Aviv, and valiantly led the fight against the ISIS in Syria and Iraq. But I never imagined writing an obituary for him. Life can be a tough taskmaster.

I never struck me that he could leave us like this even though he literally lived on the razor's edge. He was on the 'most-wanted-list' of all rogue regimes and escaped assassination bids many times. His unflinching faith and extraordinary courage always helped him prevail over his enemies, who failed in all their devious attempts to track him. As the Supreme Leader famously remarked, he was a 'living martyr'.

I had heard and read a lot about Gen. Soleimani before I came to Iran in the summer of 2018. His charismatic personality, his powerful oratory, his astounding intrepidity, his gentle demeanor and his unmatched devotion to the ideals of Islamic revolution were some of the traits that appealed to me. After almost a year in Iran, I had a chance to meet him at a ceremony to mark the death anniversary of the founder of Islamic revolution Imam Khomeini in Tehran last year.

I found myself just two rows behind him in the jam-packed mausoleum of Imam, while the Supreme Leader delivered a thoughtful speech. His love and admiration for the Supreme Leader was extraordinarily beautiful. It was a relationship of a soldier with his commander in chief. After the ceremony was over, I noticed all top government and military officials huddling around him. They all held him in great esteem for his exemplary services to Islam and Iran. I also tried to get close to him and shake his hands. That moment will live with me forever. ➔7



## Top anti-Daesh Commander Qassem Soleimani assassinated in U.S. act of terrorism

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN - Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC Quds Force, was assassinated in a U.S. air raid on his vehicle in Baghdad's international airport on Friday morning.

Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chief of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), was also martyred in the air attack. Formal funeral processions for Soleimani will be held in Iraq on Saturday, the PMU said in a statement on Friday.

General Soleimani was at frontline positions in battles against Daesh (ISIS) and other terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. He was considered a champion in the war on terrorism.

Foreign Minister Zarif has called the assassination of Soleimani "extremely dangerous and a foolish escalation."

"The US' act of international terrorism, targeting & assassinating General Soleimani—THE most effective force fighting Daesh (ISIS), Al Nusrah, Al Qaeda et al—is extremely dangerous & a foolish escalation," Zarif tweeted.

He added, "The US bears responsibility for all consequences of its rogue adventurism."

Back in November 2017, Soleimani issued a statement declaring the end of ISIS, as the Iraqi and Syrian armies, backed by popular forces and Iranian military advisors, managed to flush Daesh militants out of their last strongholds in both countries.

The Pentagon announced that Soleimani was killed on the order of Donald Trump.

According to the New York Times, the top Iranian general was killed when an American MQ-9 Reaper drone fired missiles into a convoy that was leaving the airport.

## Iraq to hold funeral procession for General Soleimani

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Iraq will hold formal funeral processions for IRGC Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani on Saturday, Iraq's Popular Forces of Hashd al-Shaabi said in a statement on Friday.

Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chief of Hashd al-Shaabi, were martyred in a terrorist attack on the Baghdad Airport the U.S. helicopters.

Soleimani was recognized as a hero in the fight against terrorism in Iraq and Syria.

Iranian officials, including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, have vowed to take revenge on the U.S. for its terrorist act.

## Esmail Gha'ani named new chief of IRGC Quds Force

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Friday appointed Brigadier General Esmail Gha'ani as the new commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force.

The appointment followed the martyrdom of Major General Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. air strike on Baghdad Airport on Friday morning.

Gha'ani had been deputy commander of the IRGC Quds Force since 1997.

## SNSC: U.S. won't get rid of miscalculation by killing Soleimani

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), in a statement on Friday, announced that the U.S. is "solely responsible" for the consequences of the criminal act of assassinating Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC Quds Force.

Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. air raid on his vehicle in Baghdad's international airport on Friday morning.

In the statement, the SNSC underscored, "Undoubtedly, the criminal act by the U.S. was done to take revenge on the great commanders of the campaign against Daesh (ISIS) and other Takfiri terrorists in Iraq and Syria."

"Tough revenge is waiting for the criminals whose hands are tainted in Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani's blood," the statement said, adding, "The revenge will take place in due time and place."

"The U.S. must realize that the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani has been the largest strategic fault of Washington in the Western Asia region. The U.S. won't get rid of this miscalculation."

Soleimani was one of the main figures in the fight against terrorism in the past several years in Iraq and Syria.

Top Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chief of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), was also martyred in the attack.

Formal funeral processions for Soleimani will take place on Saturday, the PMU said in a statement on Friday.

General Soleimani was at frontline positions in battles against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Iranian officials, including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, have vowed to take revenge on the U.S. for the terrorist act.

## Intelligence Ministry: Resistance Front to continue Soleimani's path

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — The Intelligence Ministry, in a statement on Friday, said that the Resistance Front will not abandon the honorable path of IRGC Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani who was assassinated in the U.S. air raid on the Baghdad airport early on Friday.

"Assassination of Haj Qassem Soleimani won't remain unanswered," the ministry's statement read.

"The enemy should realize that Haj Qassem's path and mission won't be abandoned. The Resistance Front's commanders will continue Soleimani's path," the statement underscored.

The IRGC announced in a statement on Friday morning that General Soleimani was martyred in an attack carried out by U.S. helicopters.

Soleimani was one of the main figures in the fight against terrorism in the past several years in Iraq and Syria.

Iranian officials, including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, have vowed to take revenge on the U.S. for its terrorist act.

# Leader vows 'hard revenge' for Gen. Soleimani's martyrdom

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei released a message on Friday to express his deepest condolences over the martyrdom of Commander of the IRGC Quds Force Major General Qassem Soleimani, saying Iran will take hard revenge on the criminals who killed the top Iranian general.

The following is the full transcript of the Leader's letter published on his official website.

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Dear Iranian Nation,

The great and accomplished Sardar has become heavenly. Last night, the untainted souls of the martyrs embraced the pure soul of Qassem Soleimani. After years of sincere and courageous jihad against the devils and evil-doers of the world and after years of wishing for martyrdom in the path of God, alas, dear Soleimani attained this lofty station and his pure blood was spilled by the vilest of humans.

I congratulate Hazrat Baqiyatullah — may our souls be sacrificed for him — and his own pure soul on this great martyrdom and I express my condolences to the Iranian nation.

He was a stellar example of those educated



and nurtured in Islam and the school of Imam Khomeini (ra). He spent his entire life engaging

in jihad in the path of God. Martyrdom was his reward for years of

## Rouhani: Nations will undoubtedly take revenge on "criminal" U.S.

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran and other independent countries in the region will "undoubtedly" take revenge on the "criminal" U.S. for assassinating General Soleimani, commander of the IRGC Quds Force.

Rouhani said that assassinating Soleimani and its accompanying individuals, including PMU deputy commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, will "double the determination of the great Iranian nation and other independent states to stand against America's excessive demands and to defend the Islamic values."

"This cowardly act is, of course, another sign of America's frustration and helplessness in the region," he added.

He said that the path of Soleimani will surely be followed by great soldiers of Islam,



highlighting, "The great Iranian nation and other independent regional countries will take revenge on criminal America."

Rouhani also offered condolences to the Iranian nation, Leader, and the family of Soleimani.

The IRGC announced in a statement on Friday morning that Major General Soleimani and al-Muhandis were martyred in an air attack carried out by U.S. helicopters.

## Zarif: U.S. terrorist act in assassinating General Soleimani is 'extremely dangerous and foolish escalation' FM says U.S. bears responsibility for all consequences of its rogue adventurism

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif released a statement on the U.S. assassination of IRGC Quds Force Commander Major General Qassem Soleimani.

"Among the believers are men true to what they promised Allah. Among them is he who has fulfilled his vow [to the death], and among them is he who awaits [his chance]. And they did not alter [the terms of their commitment] by any alteration," reads the statement, according to the Foreign Ministry website.

He expressed disgust at the American forces' terrorist and criminal move to martyr the honored commander of the army of Islam.

"The malice and stupidity of American terrorist forces who assassinated General Soleimani, a hero martyr and a commander of the fight against terrorism and extremism, will undoubtedly further strengthen the tree of resistance in the region and the world," Zarif said in the statement.

"The Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic of Iran will tap into all its political, legal, and international capacities to implement

the decisions made by the Supreme National Security Council in order to hold the criminal and terrorist regime of the U.S. accountable for this blatant crime," he added.

In a separate tweet, the chief diplomat said targeting and assassinating the "most effective force" fighting Daesh, al Nusrah, al Qaeda is "extremely dangerous and a foolish escalation."

"The US' act of international terrorism, targeting & assassinating General Soleimani—THE most effective force fighting Daesh (ISIS), Al Nusrah, Al Qaeda et al—is extremely

implacable efforts. With his departure and with God's power, his work and path will not cease and severe revenge awaits those criminals who have tainted their filthy hands with his blood and the blood of the other martyrs of last night's incident.

Shahid (martyr) Soleimani is the international face of the resistance and all who have a heart-felt connection to the resistance seek his blood revenge.

All friends — and indeed all enemies — should know that the path of jihad and resistance continues with increased motivation and certain victory awaits the mujahideen on this blessed path.

The absence of our dear and self-sacrificing Sardar is bitter, but the continuation of the resistance and its final victory will be more bitter for the murderers and criminals.

The Iranian nation will cherish the name and memory of the towering martyr, Shahid Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, together with his fellow martyrs especially the great mujahid of Islam the honorable Mr. Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. I declare three days of public mourning in the country and I congratulate and express my condolences to his honorable wife, dear children and family.

Sayyid Ali Khamenei  
13th of Dey, 1398

## Larijani: Soleimani assassination won't go unanswered

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani has condemned the U.S. for its horrendous crime of assassinating General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq, saying such a terrorist act "will not go unpunished".

"General Soleimani was a popular and powerful commander of all Iranians who thrived for the dignity and independence of Iran and was martyred by the U.S. criminal regime for this reason," Larijani said in a condolence message on Friday.

The parliament speaker underlined that the Iranian nation will not forget the U.S. crime, and said, "Iranians have done so many sacrifices to preserve the country's honor and dignity."

"The U.S. regime is the most hated regime in the world, and the arrogant system knows that through committing such crimes it will never be able to interfere with the determined will of



the great Mujaheds (veterans) brought up in the Muslim nations," he said in his message, according to Fars.

Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani was martyred in a targeted assassination attack by U.S. aircraft at Baghdad International Airport early Friday morning.

The airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), or Hashad al-Shabi.

## Lieutenant General Soleimani was symbol of Iran's national security: government

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — The spokesman for the Iranian government said on Friday that IRGC Quds Commander Lieutenant General Soleimani, who was assassinated in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad early on Friday, was a symbol of the Iranians' national security, unity and might.

"The U.S. has crossed the red-line. The Iranian nation will give crushing response to them in due time," Ali Rabiei said.

He further added that the government along with the entire Iranians are entitled to take revenge on the assassination of Lieutenant General Soleimani.

"We are not after war, but, we will not allow any aggression against any Iranian or any symbol of our national security," Rabiei said in reference to remarks by Ayatollah Ali



Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

The IRGC announced in a statement on Friday morning that General Soleimani had been martyred in the air attack carried out by U.S. helicopters.

Soleimani was one of the main figures in the fight against terrorism in the past several years in Iraq and Syria.

## U.S. and its mercenaries will pay for their terrorist crime: Velayati

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, a top foreign policy adviser to the Leader, said on Friday that the United States and its mercenaries will pay for their terrorist crime in assassinating IRGC Quds Force Commander Major General Qassem Soleimani.

Velayati said in a message that martyrdom of General Soleimani will strengthen resistance.

General Soleimani was martyred in a U.S. airstrike on Baghdad's international airport on Friday morning. The Pentagon announced that U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the attack on Soleimani.

## IRGC: U.S. happiness over martyrdom of General Soleimani will not last long

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Brigadier General Ramazan Sharif, the spokesman for the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, said on Friday that the United States' happiness over the martyrdom of Commander of the IRGC Quds Force Major General Qassem Soleimani "will not last long".

"Definitely, this happiness of the United States will not last long and will be turned into mourning," Sharif said in a televised interview.

General Soleimani was martyred in a U.S. airstrike on Baghdad's international airport on Friday morning.

The Pentagon announced that U.S. President Donald Trump had ordered the attack on Soleimani.



Sharif said that the IRGC and the resistance front will take vengeance on killers of the top general.

"The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, the people and the resistance front will think about nothing but taking revenge for blood of this martyr who brought pride for the Iranian people and the Islamic community," he stated.

## Harsh retaliation awaits U.S. for killing General Soleimani: defense minister

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami on Friday warned the United States of severe consequences for the assassination of IRGC Quds Force Commander Major General Qassem Soleimani, vowing to take "severe revenge" from those behind the attack.

"We will take severe revenge from the entire agents and perpetrators behind the assassination," Hatami said in a statement.

The minister called General Soleimani a brave guardian of Iran who devoted his life to safeguarding the Islamic Revolution and territories of Muslim nations.

## Army ground force chief: Iran's armed forces will continue path of General Soleimani

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari, commander of Army ground forces, said on Friday that the Iranian armed forces will continue the path of General Qassem Soleimani in the fight against

global arrogance.

"He who was martyred by the most blood-thirsty enemies of Islam, the criminal United States and its allies, achieved his wish," Heidari said.

General Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of the IRGC, was martyred in a U.S. airstrike on Baghdad's international airport on Friday morning. The Pentagon announced that President Donald Trump had ordered the attack on Soleimani.



# Iraqi PM hails Soleimani, Muhandis as symbols of victory against ISIS

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi on Friday condemned the assassination of IRGC Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU), in a U.S. airstrike at the Baghdad International Airport.

The airstrike was an act of aggression on Iraq and breach of its sovereignty that will lead to war in Iraq, the region and the world, Abdul-Mahdi said in a statement, Daily Sabah reported.

He said “the two martyrs were huge symbols of the victory” against the Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group.

Abdul-Mahdi also said the strike was an outrageous breach of the conditions for the presence of U.S. forces in the country.

He invited parliament to convene an extraordinary session, calling on them to take legislative actions that would safeguard Iraq’s dignity, security and sovereignty.

The IRGC announced in a statement on Friday morning that General Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-com-



mand of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), were martyred in the attack.

The Iraqi pro-government group also confirmed the incident.

“The deputy head of the Hashed, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, and head of the Quds Force, Qasem Soleimani, were killed in a U.S. strike that targeted their car on the Baghdad International Airport road,” it said in a statement on Friday.

Iraqi President Barham Salih condemned the attack and urged restraint from all parties.

Iraq must put its national interest first and avoid the tragedies of armed conflict that have plagued it over four decades, he said in a statement.

Qassem Soleimani’s assassination drew widespread condemnation from across the world.

Kashmiri people in city of Kargil staged a massive protest, while carrying placards that read “down with USA”.

The shouted slogans against the US and Israeli regimes during the demonstration and condemned the U.S. airstrike.

## Israel on high alert following assassination of senior Iranian commander

**Al Jazeera**— Following assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force commander, Israel’s military had gone on heightened alert amid fears that Iran could strike through its regional allies such as Hezbollah to the north, or through Palestinian group Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza.

Israel’s foreign ministry and defense officials announced a high-security alert at Israel’s oversea delegations, fearing retaliation by Iran following the death of Soleimani.

Israel’s defense minister summoned the country’s military and security chiefs to Tel Aviv in the wake of the killing. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

has reportedly cut short his trip to Greece.

Syria condemns killing of Soleimani

Syria strongly condemns the “treacherous, criminal American aggression” that led to the killing of Iran’s Qassem Soleimani, a foreign ministry source said on Friday.

The source said the attack constituted a “serious escalation” and reaffirmed U.S. responsibility for instability in Iraq.

Iraq’s Sadr mourns Soleimani, reactivates Mahdi army  
Iraq’s prominent Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr said the killing of Soleimani was targeting Iraq’s opposition

and Jihad, adding that it will not weaken its resolve.

In a statement, Al-Sadr called on his militias (Army of Imam Mahdi) and “other national and disciplined” armed groups to be prepared to protect Iraq. He also sent his condolences to Iran.

Qays al-Khazali, the head of Asaib Ahl al-Haq armed faction, said “all fighters should be on high alert for upcoming battle and great victory”.

“The end of Israel and removal of the U.S. from the region will be the result of the assassination of Soleimani and Muhandis,” he said in a statement published by Iraqi media.

## Pompeo claims U.S. committed to ‘de-escalation’, hours after assassinating Soleimani

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has claimed that the United States is committed to “de-escalation” hours after U.S. airstrike at Baghdad International Airport killed General Qassem Soleimani.

Pompeo made the claim in a number of tweets on Friday.

“I spoke today with Chinese Politburo Member Yang Jiechi to discuss @realDonaldTrump’s decision to eliminate Soleimani in response to imminent threats to American lives. I reiterated our commitment to de-escalation,” he said.

“Discussed with @DominicRaab the recent decision to take defensive action to eliminate Qassem Soleimani. Thankful that our allies recognize the continuing aggressive threats posed by the Iranian Quds Force. The U.S. remains committed to de-escalation,” Soleimani said in another tweet.

“Spoke with @HeikoMaas about @realDonaldTrump’s decision to take defensive action to eliminate Qassem Soleimani. Germany is also concerned over the Iranian regime’s continued military



provocations. The U.S. remains committed to de-escalation.”

The IRGC announced in a statement on Friday morning that Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), were martyred in the attack carried out by the United States.

## Trump ordered assassination of Qassem Soleimani: Pentagon

U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the assassination of Iran’s Quds Force commander Major-General Qassem Soleimani, the Department of Defense announced this evening, al-masdar news reported on Friday.

“At the direction of the President, the U.S. military has taken decisive defensive action to protect U.S. personnel abroad by killing Qassem Soleimani, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization,” the statement said.

“General Soleimani was actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region. General Soleimani and his Quds Force were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of American and coalition service members and the wounding of thousands more. He had orchestrated attacks on coalition bases in Iraq and over the last several months – including the attack on December 27th – culminating in the death and wounding of additional American and Iraqi personnel. General



Soleimani also approved the attacks on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad that took place this week,” the statement claimed.

Prior to this statement, U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted a picture of the American flag in response to the death of Soleimani.

The Pentagon is expected to release a statement shortly about the assassinations of Soleimani and the commander of the Kata’eb Hezbollah, Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis.

## U.S. embassy in Iraq asks American citizens to depart Iraq ‘immediately’

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The U.S. embassy in Iraq has issued a security warning to American citizens to depart Iraq immediately, suspending all public consular operations until further notice.

In a statement released on Friday, the embassy said, “Due to heightened tensions in Iraq and the region, the U.S. Embassy urges American citizens to heed the January 2020 Travel Advisory and depart Iraq immediately.”

It added, “U.S. citizens should depart via airline while possible, and failing that, to other countries via land. Due to Iranian-backed militia attacks at the U.S. embassy compound, all public consular operations are suspended until further notice. U.S. citizens should not approach the embassy. The U.S. Consulate General in Erbil is open for visa and American Citizen Services appointments, including passport issuance.”

The statement came hours after the United States, au-



thorized by President Trump, fired missiles into a convoy that was leaving the Baghdad International Airport.

The attack, conducted by American MQ-9 Reaper drone, killed Major General Qasim Soleimani, who led the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), leading to a serious escalation of Trump’s growing confrontation with Tehran.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, dozens of protesters broke into the U.S. embassy in Baghdad after smashing the main door and setting fire to a reception area.

The embassy was evacuated as many angry Iraqi demonstrators gathered outside the gates of the compound to condemn Washington’s earlier attack on al-Hashd al-Shaabi.

On Sunday, U.S. forces had conducted drone strikes on a number of Kata’ib Hezbollah bases in Iraq’s western Anbar province, killing at least 25 individuals and leaving another 51 injured, according to PMU.

## Bernie Sanders condemns Trump for ordering assassination of General Soleimani

U.S. Senator and 2020 presidential candidate Bernie Sanders has condemned President Donald Trump for ordering the assassination of Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani, warning that the killing will destabilize the region and puts the U.S. on the path to another war, Press TV reported.

Democratic leaders in both chambers of Congress expressed outrage over Trump’s ordered strike, saying the Republican president did not obtain congressional approval.

Perhaps the most forceful condemnation came from Sanders, an independent senator from Vermont.

“When I voted against the war in Iraq in 2002, I feared it would lead to greater destabilization of the region,” Sanders tweeted on Thursday. “That fear unfortunately turned out to be true.”

“The U.S. has lost approximately 4,500 brave troops, tens of thousands have been wounded, and we’ve spent trillions [in Iraq],” Sanders added.

“Trump’s dangerous escalation brings

us closer to another disastrous war in the Middle East that could cost countless lives and trillions more dollars. Trump promised to end endless wars, but this action puts us on the path to another one.”

Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), were killed in U.S. airstrikes in the Iraqi capital Baghdad early on Friday.

The U.S. strike took place at the Baghdad International Airport, killing eight other people.

The IRGC confirmed in a statement that Soleimani and al-Muhandis were martyred in the attack carried out by U.S. helicopters. The Iraqi pro-government group also confirmed the incident.

The U.S. Defense Department confirmed the strike, saying it came “at the direction of the president”.

The media bureau Iraq’s pro-government Popular Mobilization Units, a voluntary force better known in Arabic as Hashd al-Shabai, described the attack as a “cowardly U.S. bombing”.

U.S. President Donald Trump’s order to assassinate Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani has prompted swift condemnation from several U.S. officials and lawmakers in Congress.

US Democratic leaders in both chambers of Congress expressed outrage over Trump’s ordered strike, saying the Republican president did not obtain congressional approval.

“We cannot put the lives of American servicemembers, diplomats and others further at risk by engaging in provocative and disproportionate actions,” said U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang was the first White House contender to react to the strike, tweeting: ‘War with Iran is the last thing we need and is not the will of the American people. We should be

acting to deescalate tensions and protect our people in the region.’

The assassination came as the U.S. military said on Sunday it had carried out strikes in western Iraq against the Kataib Hezbollah group, which is part of the pro-government Popular Mobilization Units.

Iraqi security sources said at least 25 fighters were killed and at least 55 wounded following the air attacks.

Caretaker Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi called the move a “dangerous escalation that threatens the security of Iraq and the region” in a statement on Sunday.

Abdul Mahdi said U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper had called him about half an hour before the U.S. raids to tell him of the U.S. intentions to hit Kataib Hezbollah’s bases. He said he asked Esper to call off US plans.

The U.S. raids drew a wave of condemnation from officials and movements across the region, and triggered furious public protests outside the U.S. embassy in Baghdad.

## Bashar al-Assad condoles Leader over Soleimani’s martyrdom

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has extended his condolences to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei over the martyrdom of Major General Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC Quds Force.

In a message on Friday, Assad said he received the news of Soleimani’s martyrdom with grief and sorrow, Fars reported.

He also said the Syrian nation will never forget that General Soleimani stood beside the Syrian Armed Forces in defending Syria against terrorism.



## Soleimani assassination unlawful: UN Special Rapporteur

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Special Rapporteur of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said that Qassem Soleimani’s assassination is unlawful and violates international human rights law.

Following the assassination of Major General Qassem Soleimani, Agnes Callamard the French human rights expert and Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on her twitter wrote that the targeted killings of Major General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis are most likely unlawful and violate international human rights law.

She noted this assassination is outside the context of active hostilities. The use of drones or other means for targeted killing is almost never likely to be legal, she added.

IRGC confirmed on Friday that Quds Force commander General Soleimani has been assassinated by U.S. airstrikes on Friday at Baghdad airport. Pentagon said in a statement that U.S. President Donald Trump has ordered the attack.

## Ayatollah Sistani: U.S. has killed commander who defeated ISIS

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani has strongly condemned the killing of IRGC Quds Force chief Major General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chief of Hash al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces), saying the U.S. has killed commanders “who defeated ISIS terrorists”.

“The vicious attack on Baghdad international airport last night is an insolent breach of Iraqi sovereignty and international agreements. It led to the killing of several commanders who defeated ISIS terrorists,” Ayatollah Sistani’s office said in a statement, according to aawsat.com.

General Soleimani and al-Muhandis were martyred in an air raid on Baghdad’s international airport on Friday morning. The Pentagon confirmed that President Trump had ordered the terrorist act.

“These events and more indicate the country is heading towards very difficult times. We call on all concerned parties to behave with self-restraint and act wisely,” the grand ayatollah said.

Iraqi cleric Moqtada al-Sadr also ordered his followers to be ready to defend Iraq and urged all sides to behave wisely.



## Soleimani assassination by U.S. ‘an adventurous move’ that will flare up tensions in Middle East – Moscow

**Moscow (RT)** — The U.S. airstrike that killed a senior Iranian commander near Baghdad will exacerbate tensions throughout the Middle East, the Russian foreign ministry warned on Friday.

Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran’s IRGC Quds Force, was killed in a U.S. operation at Baghdad International Airport on Friday morning. Moscow considers the operation “an adventurous move that will lead to an escalation of tension throughout the region,” the ministry said.

“Soleimani served devotedly the cause of defending the national interests of Iran. We express our sincere condolences to the Iranian people,” the short statement said.

The targeted assassination has sparked anger in Iran and Iraq. Officials in Tehran pledged to avenge the death of the high-profile member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) while Iraqi caretaker prime minister called it an act of aggression against his country that violates the terms under which American troops are hosted on Iraqi soil.

## China urges Iran, U.S. to practice self-restraint

**TEHRAN (IRNA)** — Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang on Friday reacted to assassination of Commander of the IRGC Quds Force Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, urging Iran and the U.S. to practice self-restraint.

Speaking in a regular press conference, Shuang said China has always been against using power in international relations.

He added that China is concerned about escalation of tensions after General Soleimani assassination.

He suggested all parties to follow UN Charter regulations and the basic principles of international law.

Shuang called for respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and preserving peace and stability in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf as well.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	384099.6
IFX	5020.86

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	47,080 rials
GBP	55,506 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$69.35/b
WTI	\$63.94/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.96/b
Gold	\$1,549.60/oz
Silver	\$818.24/oz
Platinum	\$996.95/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

TEDPIX gains 23,012 points in a week

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 23,012 points, or six percent, to stand at 384,100 points in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IRNA reported.



TSE's worth of trades stood at 14.228 trillion rials (about \$338.7 million) in the past week, with a four-percent rise from its preceding week.

As previously announced, TEDPIX rose 49,000 points, or 16.7 percent, to stand at 353,997 points at the end of the past Iranian calendar month of Azar (ends on December 21).

Reportedly, some 82.215 billion securities worth 432.151 trillion rials (about \$10.29 billion) were traded through 10.153 million deals at TSE during the previous month, with growth of 61 percent and 76 percent in the number and value of traded securities, respectively, while 71 percent rise in the number of deals.

Oil prices jump and markets sink on escalating U.S.-Iran tensions

Oil prices jumped while global markets sank on Friday after the U.S. killed a top Iranian military commander in an air strike, shoving geopolitics to the top of investors' agenda for the new year.

Brent crude jumped 3 percent to over \$69 a barrel, putting the international oil benchmark on track for its biggest gain in a month. Stocks dropped in Asia and Europe, with Germany's Dax leading declines with a 1.75 per cent fall, while futures pointed declines of over 1 percent in the U.S.

"Geopolitical risks are still alive and kicking," said Elwin de Groot, head of macro strategy at Rabobank. "Over the past few years these risks have undoubtedly affected markets, but hardly with any lasting impact. Yet geopolitics remains important, if only because it could always turn into a more nasty factor for markets at some point."

Assets seen as shelters during times of strife pushed higher. Gold climbed by 1.4 percent to \$1,550 an ounce, a near four-month high. Government bonds rallied, pushing the yield on 10-year U.S. Treasuries down by 0.07 percentage points to 1.8 percent.

Similar price gains were seen in UK, German and other key European government bonds. The Japanese yen — a classic barometer of investors' levels of fear — also pushed higher. The currency pushed the dollar down by 0.5 percent to ¥108 — the yen's strongest point since late October. Emerging market currencies, such as South Africa's rand, came under pressure, again reflecting a general burst of nervousness. The dollar leapt by 1.8 percent to 14.33 rand. Olivier Jakob, managing director of oil consultancy Petromatrix, said "the killing of Soleimani calls for a serious increase of the geopolitical risk premium".

"This was supposed to be a holiday week for many traders. Many will be cutting the holidays short and called in for an emergency risk meeting," he said.

(Source: Financial Times)

Brazil trade surplus shrinks 20% in 2019 to its smallest in four years

Brazil's trade surplus shrank 20% to \$46.67 billion last year, official data showed on Thursday, as upwardly revised exports in recent months failed to mask a widespread slump in overseas demand for Brazilian goods over the course of 2019.

The upward revisions to exports in the September-November period are likely to lift gross domestic product growth estimates for the last two quarters, but overall, the shrinking surplus will likely prove to have been a drag on economic growth last year.

The surplus in 2020 could be even smaller, Lucas Ferraz, trade secretary at the Economy Ministry, said, as strengthening domestic demand lifts overall economic growth to around 2.3% and spurs imports more than exports.

"This growth will be driven by domestic demand, not external demand ... which will tend to boost imports more than exports," Ferraz told reporters in Brasilia, saying that it "should put pressure on the trade balance." He said the ministry will not release its 2020 estimate until April.

December's trade surplus was \$5.6 billion, the Economy Ministry said, wider than the \$4.35 billion median estimate in a Reuters poll of economists. Exports totaled \$18.16 billion in the month and imports were \$12.56 billion.

(Source: reuters.com)

Caspian port to be linked with national rail network by March 2021

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Head desk of Iran's Budget and Planning Organization (BPO) said Caspian Port in Gilan Province's Anzali Free Trade Zone, will be connected to the national rail network by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021).

As reported by Tasnim news agency on Friday, Nobakht made the remarks during a resilient economy staff meeting with a focus on Rasht-Caspian-Anzali railway project.

"By the end of next year, all southern ports should be connected to the Caspian port via railroad, since a significant part of our trade exchanges with Eurasian countries is taking place through these ports," he said.

He further pointed to the Rasht-Astara Railway project and noted that Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev will visit Gilan in the near future to follow up on the completion of the project.

"Using the capacities of the Anzali Free Trade Zone we can increase our trade exchanges with the Caspian Sea nations," he said.

Nobakht also mentioned the free trade deal with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and said: "This unique opportunity should be



used to export our products to the Eurasian nations through Caspian and Anzali ports next year."

Back in August 2019, the managing director of Anzali Free Trade Zone said connecting the Caspian port to the North-South Corridor is expected to boost business

transactions between Iran and its northern neighbors especially in the Eurasian union.

According to Reza Masroor, promoting trade activities through the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) would be beneficial for the Islamic Republic. He added that doing trade through this

channel would considerably decrease the costs and time span of commodity transport and would lead to an economic boom in Russia, Iran, and India.

Located on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, the Anzali Free Trade Zone, in which the Caspian port lies, is regarded as one of the major economic hubs of Iran with an area of 9,400 hectares of land and 40km shoreline.

It is seen as the entrance and exit point of the International North-South Transport Corridor.

Currently, Iran is developing a railroad project to connect the Rasht-Qazvin railway to Anzali and Astara ports. Another line is also under construction which will link Rasht to Caspian port.

Once the project is complete, Caspian port will become the largest hub in northern Iran and make a major contribution to national and local economic development. The route will connect Iran with Russia's Baltic ports and give Russia rail connectivity to both the Persian Gulf and the Indian rail network. All the mentioned projects are meant to contribute to achieving INSTC's envisaged plans.

'No worries over supply of basic goods'

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said on Thursday that the government has stored enough amounts of basic goods and there are no worries over supply of such commodities in the country, ILNA reported.

Speaking on the sidelines of a visit to an industrial park in southwest of Tehran, the official noted that the production of most of the basic goods in the country has been experiencing an upward trend and necessary measures have been taken for the imports of those items which cannot be produced inside the country.

Underlining the importance of domestic production, the minister said the country's producers should be supported and all the barriers in the way of domestic production should be removed.

In late November 2019, head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said nearly 14 million tons of basic goods were cleared through Iran's customs since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2019) up to November.

According to Mehdi Mirashrafi, nearly 20 million tons of goods have



been imported into the country since the beginning of the current year, of which about 14 million tons were basic goods.

Back in December, Rahmani had said that developing the country's domestic production must be seriously pursued under any condition.

Speaking in a gathering with directors and board members of the country's large industrial and mining organizations and corporations, Rahmani said: "Our enemies expected the country's industry sector to shut down under the pressure of the unjust sanctions, however, their plots did not work out and we are still standing strong."

Production of tires for heavy vehicles to exceed consumption: industry min.

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN**— Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said production of the heavy vehicles tire in the country will be more than domestic consumption of the product, ILNA reported.

Making the remarks during visiting some industrial units in Parand Industrial Park in southwest of Tehran on Thursday, the minister said, "We have five production projects ready to be implemented in this due that will oversupply the domestic market with heavy vehicles tires and in this way the threat [sanctions] will be turned into opportunity."

Iran has imported three million tires of heavy vehicles during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), according to Mohammadreza Ganji, the head of Iranian Tire Industry Association.

Two weeks ago, Rahmani had announced that a truck tire manufacturing plant will be inaugurated in the country in the coming month to meet 25 percent of the domestic requirement.

"We are currently importing 70 percent of our required truck tires; but five manufacturing plants have been planned to reduce the imports. Putting the first plant into operation next month, we will achieve 55 percent self-reliance in terms



*Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani (3rd L) visits some industrial units in Parand Industrial Park in southwest of Tehran on Thursday.*

of this product", the minister further said.

"We have taken several serious steps in terms of domestic production and self-reliance and the first one is to prevent

Refrigerators, freezers output up 4.5% in 8 months yr/yr

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Manufacturing of refrigerators and freezers in Iran has increased 4.5 percent during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21, 2019), from the same period of time in the previous year.

According to the data provided by Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, 754,000 refrigerators and freezers have been manufactured in the eight-month period of this year, IRNA reported.

Last week, the director general of Metal Industries and Home Appliances Department of the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade announced that Iran will unveil two national brands of home appliances in the near future.

Abbas Hashemi said that the new brands will meet some noticeable requirement of the domestic market.

Due to the U.S. sanctions on Iran, two South Korean brands of home appliances left the Iranian market some time ago because they could not import their required parts.

And now their Iranian partners are resuming production relying on domestic capabilities.

"The Iranian sides managed to replace the Korean parts with the domestically-made ones

to create new brands", the official highlighted.

As the current Iranian calendar year of 1398 is named the year of «Pickup in Production» by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and given that realization of this motto toward Iran's self-reliance is in fact the only way to tackle the U.S. cruel sanctions, all governmental bodies have defined programs to boost and flourish domestic production and are seriously pursuing them.

In this due, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has defined seven major plans to materialize this significant objective, among them the most important one which is development of domestic production has specified programs for boosting production of products in different sectors.

For home appliances, the set program is manufacturing of 1,000 refrigerators, 800,000 washing machines, and 300,000 gas fireplace stoves in the current Iranian year (ends on March 19, 2020).

As the import of many products of this group has been banned, it could be an opportunity for domestic manufacturers to promote their products, something which will lead not only to self-reliance but also to high quality of products which will create export markets.

Tajikistan looks for rising trade with Iran up to \$1b: envoy

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Tajikistan's Ambassador to Iran Nizamuddin Zahedi said his country is looking for increasing trade turnover with Iran to \$1b, IRNA reported.

Making the remarks in a meeting with the board members of the Chamber of Commerce of Sistan-Baluchestan Province in southeast of Iran on Wednesday, Zahedi expressed his country's eagerness for boosting trade ties with Iran and said considering the two countries' good relations the trade should also increase up to \$1b.

According to the official, Tajikistan is providing special facilities for investors in the country, especially in economic zones, tax exemption is one of which.

He further mentioned construction of power plants in the country as a potent area for cooperation and investment, saying "considering Tajikistan's environmental conditions, we always welcome investment for construction of hydroelectric power plants."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Zahedi mentioned the positive relations between the two countries, saying "Iran and Tajikistan have so much in common but due to some issues the relations between the two countries declined in the past few years, but this year our relation has entered a new phase, the two sides should use the existing capacities for further development of all-out ties."

Iran and Tajikistan held the 13th meeting of their joint economic committee in early December.

Attended by senior officials from both sides, the event was chaired by Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian and Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan Usmonali Uzmonzoda.

Agriculture, health, joining the two countries' electricity networks, water, education, communication and information technology, transportation and trade have been mentioned as some of the potential areas for mutual cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan.

Major auto makers to be privatized by March 2021

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry plans to hand over the country's major auto makers to the private sector by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 2021), IRIB reported, quoting a deputy in the named ministry.

According to Afshar Fathollahi, the privatization process is going to be implemented in three phases. The first phase, which is already underway, is the hand-over of non-productive assets, Fathollahi explained.

The next level would be awarding the subsidiaries of these car makers, he said, adding these companies could be handed over to the private sector in the form of shares or full ownership.

This phase has also been started for some of priority companies.

Ultimately, the main companies will be handed over by the end of the next year.

"According to our timetable, all three phases must have been completed by the mentioned date," he added. Back in October, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani had announced that his ministry is planning on

handing over the country's major auto makers to the private sector.

"Automobile manufacturing companies are not going to be awarded to any real entity, but we are considering handing them over to the private sector," the minister said.

He reiterated that the government is not interested in running businesses and it backs privatization.

Since the U.S. re-imposed sanctions on Iran to pressure the country's economy, most of the European automakers active in the country has left under U.S. pressures, however Iran has been taking necessary measures to mitigate the impact of the sanctions and counter the U.S. actions.

Improving and boosting domestic production has been one of the major strategies that Iran has been following in the past two years in order to increase its economy's independence.

In mid-May 2019, Rahmani issued a directive on "strengthening domestic manufacturing of imported auto parts".

He said the policy of domestic manufacturing of auto parts should be seriously followed up.



# Lack of enough CNG stations could rise gasoline consumption

**E N E R G Y** TEHRAN — Head of d e s k Tehran Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Association says although converting gasoline-fuel cars into dual-fuel ones in the country is expected to raise CNG consumption by up to 10 percent, but lack of enough CNG stations could once again rise gasoline consumption.

According to Ardeshtir Dadras, since the implementation of the gasoline rationing scheme, the consumption of CNG has increased by 15-20 percent across the country.

The official expressed hope that by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020), the country's CNG consumption would be increased by 30 percent.

Currently, only 50 to 60 percent of the capacity of the country's CNG stations is being used and even after an increase in the number of dual-fuel cars, no shortage is going to be felt in the short term, Dadras said.

He further noted that 1.46 million vehicles in the country's public transportation fleet will be converted into dual-fuel cars over the next two years, adding that the number of CNG stations is not enough in some



metropolises and a balance should be made between the number of cars and stations to avoid supply shortage.

According to the Managing Director of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) Alireza Sadeqabadi, the

daily consumption of LNG in the country is currently at 800 million cubic meters.

Back in December 2019, head of the CNG promotion program at the National Iranian Oil Product Distribution Company (NIOPDC) said: "CNG consumption in the country has increased by 10 percent since the implementation of the rationing plan."

Speaking in a press conference, Hassan Gholipour put the average consumption of CNG in the month before the gasoline rationing, at 19.3 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d), and said the figure had risen to about 22 mcm/d, indicating a two-mcm/d growth.

Following the implementation of the gasoline rationing scheme, the government has been promoting the use of CNG as a replacement for gasoline, and has declared the mentioned fuel as the country's national fuel.

People have also been welcoming CNG after the rationing because of the rise in gasoline prices and since, being a cheaper fuel, CNG seems a more affordable fuel for most of the people with lower income ranges.

## Financing secured for LNG-to-power project in El Salvador

Energía del Pacífico (EDP) has announced completion of project financing for the LNG-to-power project currently under construction at the Port of Acajutla, El Salvador. The transformative infrastructure project brings approximately \$1 billion foreign direct investment (FDI) for the Central American nation, making it the largest private investment ever in the country.

The project is comprised of a 378 MW natural gas-fired power plant, a floating storage regasification unit (FSRU), and an approximately 44 km electric transmission line that will connect to the Central American Electrical Interconnection System, strengthening the country's electric grid. The project is scheduled to be operational by the end of 2021.

EDP will introduce a new source of thermal generation to El Salvador through power purchase agreements with seven of the country's distribution companies. The plant's use of natural gas will reduce the amount of imported diesel and heavy fuel oil fired generation in El Salvador's electricity mix, resulting in significant environmental benefits for the country and the region.

U.S.-based Invenergy developed EDP in partnership with El Salvador-based partners Grupo Calleja, VC Energy de Centroamérica and Quantum Energy.

"Energía del Pacífico is a transformational project for El Salvador and the entire region – a shining example of the enormous opportunity that can be created, despite prior obstacles, when private initiatives

have strong government support," said Michael Polsky, Invenergy Founder and Chief Executive Officer. "Leveraging our decades of development, engineering, finance, construction and operating experience, Invenergy is uniquely positioned to lead this partnership and execute this complex project."

EDP and Shell have executed a long-term agreement for supply of LNG for the project. In partnership with BW LNG and BW Offshore, LNG will be converted to natural gas on an FSRU that will be permanently moored offshore. Saam Towage will provide tug support services for the project. LNG delivered to the FSRU will be regasified and transported from the FSRU to the power plant through a sub-sea pipeline to be engineered and constructed by maritime infrastructure contractor Boskalis.

### ■ The internal combustion engines

Clean, reliable power will be generated by Wärtsilä internal combustion engines running on natural gas and a steam turbine generator. Elecnor will engineer and construct the 230 kV double-circuit transmission line and associated substations.

Leading global financial institutions Overseas Private Investment Corporation, International Finance Corporation, IDB Invest, Finnish Export Credit Ltd and KfW IPEX-Bank are lenders to the project. White & Case served as transaction counsel, Arias as Salvadoran counsel and Astris Finance acted as financial advisor for EDP.

(Source: [ingindustry.com](http://ingindustry.com))

## The UK generated more power from renewables than fossil fuels in 2019

For the full twelve months that made up 2019, the UK generated more power from renewables than fossil fuels. According to data from the National Grid, renewable sources of power, including wind farms, solar panels, hydro plants and nuclear energy combined with clean power imported by sub-sea cables, provided 48.5% of the UK's electricity in 2019.

The remaining 8.5% that did not come from fossil fuels or power from renewables was produced by biomass. While this is a type of renewable power, due to the fact that it produces carbon emissions to generate electricity from burning wood pellets, it isn't considered a clean form of alternative energy.

Over the past decade, the UK has gradually shifted away from fossil fuels. According to National Grid CEO John Pettigrew, in 2009, approximately 30% of power in the nation was generated by coal. However, in the years that followed, the UK began to move toward solar and wind projects as well as carbon-free electricity from Europe.

"2019 is a massively historic milestone in that it's the first time ever in the UK that we've had more electricity produced from zero carbon fuels than from fossil fuels," Pettigrew told Sky News in an interview.

The UK must continue increasing its reliance on power from renewables to meet its clean energy targets.

In spite of generating more power



from renewables than ever before, the UK is still a long way off from meeting its 2050 net zero carbon emissions goals. The reason is that to meet these goals, not only energy has to be decarbonized, but transportation as well.

Pettigrew says that to achieve net zero carbon goals, it would probably take about 36 to 40 million electric vehicles by 2050. Moreover, since all those cars would need to be powered, the National Grid has to think very carefully about making sure it can produce the necessary infrastructure to support those vehicles.

That being said, aside from the need for clean transportation, the UK is continuing to work on securing more clean energy projects. One such project to obtain power from renewables is a cable Power from renewables - wind and solar energy under the North Sea that will connect the nation with Norway, allowing it to harness the hydro power generated in the Scandinavian country.

(Source: [hydrogennewsfuel.com](http://hydrogennewsfuel.com))

## Energy outlook for 2020: the need to forge new path

Natural gas and crude oil had a difficult year in 2019, with global oversupplies keeping prices low. Much the same is expected in 2020.

In Europe major changes are afoot with the European Green Deal expected by March, providing the framework for energy developments over the next 30 years, with net-zero emissions by 2050 to be enshrined into law.

In Asia energy supply security concerns and increasing reliance on domestic resources, unleashed by the U.S.-China trade war, will continue to impact LNG export markets, contributing to the global LNG glut and low prices.

The East Med was in a state of turmoil in 2019 due to Turkey's intimidating and aggressive actions, in support of its determination to pursue unsustainable demands. This is expected to continue into 2020, and unless a solution is found, it could destabilize the region further and risk escalation of disputes.

This will probably be the most important development in Europe's energy sector in 2020, setting the tone and direction for the next 30 years.



Its main aims include Europe becoming the first climate-neutral continent, enshrining a 2050 climate-neutrality goal into law and setting-up a new carbon reduction target for 2030 to at least 50 per cent. In addition, the European Investment Bank will be turned into the European Climate Bank, ceasing support of fossil fuel projects after 2021.

The Green Deal will be the main flagship of the new European Commission and it is expected to have a tremendous impact on the future of energy, including gas, in Europe.

OPEC agreed in December to cut crude oil production and extend cuts to 31 March. OPEC expects its own production to decline from 35 million bbls/d in 2019 to 32.8 million bbls/d in 2024.

U.S. oil production is also expected to decline in 2020 due to lower prices, tighter lending and reduced spending, down to 13.1 million bbls/day in comparison to 13.5 million bbls/day in 2019.

But other oil producing countries such as Brazil, Guyana and Norway are expected to more than make up for it, producing additional volumes that will meet global demand in 2020.

### ■ The global oil demand

As a result, global oil demand growth is expected to be anemic in 2020, with some forecasts expecting it to be near 1 million bbls/day, keeping prices down. With Brent crude likely to be nearer the \$60/bbl range, it will impact oil-linked LNG prices.

As a result of the trade war with the U.S., China has made energy supply security top priority, favoring domestic energy production, including coal. This will impact LNG imports, limiting growth for the second year running.

Japan and South Korea are also expected to see little change in LNG imports during 2020. As a result, Asia-Pacific will remain oversupplied, with diversions of LNG to Europe expected to continue.

But with European gas storages full and a mild winter, the ability of Europe to absorb diverted LNG may be more limited in 2020, which may cause U.S. LNG shut-ins.

In addition, the just-agreed Gazprom-Ukraine deal means that there will be no disruptions in the supply of Russian gas to Europe. Also completion of Nord Stream 2 early in 2020, despite U.S. sanctions, and possibly TurkStream 2, mean that Gazprom could increase its overall gas supplies to Europe in comparison to 2019.

In the meanwhile, global gas liquefaction capacity is expected to carry on increasing, by about another 30 million tons in 2020, on top of the estimated 40 million tons increase in 2019.

The result of these will be an oversupply of gas and LNG, with prices staying low for another year, likely to average below \$4/million btu during summer 2020, both in Europe and Asia.

On the positive side, low LNG prices may stimulate demand, especially in countries that cannot afford high energy prices. This is especially so in South Asia, where infrastructure is improving and could support LNG import growth.

After the failure of COP25 to arrive to a consensus on new, more ambitious, climate targets, COP26 is not expected to fare any better. U.S. resistance and unwillingness by China and India to curb energy demand and increase their commitments will limit achievements. Global energy consumption and carbon emissions will continue to increase, with more extreme climatic events feeding increasingly polarized environmental activism.

### ■ The renewables penetration

Renewables penetration will continue globally at a rapid pace. As a result, the world will continue to experience an energy supply glut, with global energy markets remaining highly competitive and prices persistently low.

In the East Med, Turkey looks set to continue its intimidation and aggressive actions, not heeding widespread condemnation, but a hot incident will be avoided.

The EU will intensify its efforts to normalize relations with Turkey through negotiation.

The signing of the East Med gas pipeline inter-governmental agreement between Greece, Cyprus and Israel will bring the three countries closer together. It will certainly strengthen relations between them at a critical time for the East Med, promoting closer cooperation.

With the cost of gas in Israel, before it enters the pipeline, being more than \$4.50/million btu, and the cost of the pipeline estimated between \$7-10 billion, the price of gas in Europe will need to exceed \$8/million btu – which is not likely – before the EastMed become financially viable. For similar reasons, not even a pipeline to Europe via Turkey is viable.

Despite the undoubted political backing of the pipeline, even from the U.S., to build it needs to be both financially viable and to secure buyers for the gas it will carry. Both of these are facing major challenges.

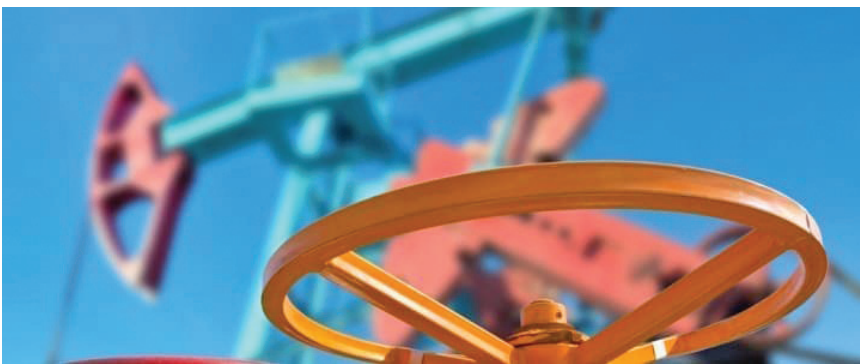
Drilling off Cyprus and Lebanon will lead to more gas discoveries in 2020, but the global glut of energy supplies and EGD will prove to be major challenges to the export of East Med gas to international markets.

Egypt, though, will continue with the successful development of its energy sector and Israel will finally export its first gas to Egypt.

Overall, 2020 is expected to be another challenging year for energy, both globally and in the East Med. Hopefully resumption of negotiations to resolve the Cyprus problem, with UN and EU support, will bring hope.

(Source: [hellenicshippingnews.com](http://hellenicshippingnews.com))

## Is this the next great oil frontier?



Angola is hoping to sell stakes in state-run Sonangol oil company and a string of other energy companies. To do that, it's banking on major economic reforms to attract investors and bring in much-needed cash.

No one's forgotten the gross mismanagement of Sonangol under its previous leadership, though, so the Angolan government is going to have to make people believe things have changed. Sonangol has a history it needs to overcome.

The goal is an IPO for Sonangol in 2022. Beyond that, the government is also hoping to lure investors into stakes in Puma Energy, the China-Sonangol oil venture, and the Ivory Coast SIR refinery. But it's only been two years since we saw a change of regime in Angola, and investors don't seem thoroughly convinced just yet.

In 2017, Joao Lourenco took power, ending the four-decade power play of Jose Eduardo dos Santos, along with his daughter's destructive leadership of Sonangol. But two years may not be enough time to convince investors.

The government has made it easier for investors to repatriate money via commercial banks; it's made it possible to invest in the sector without a local partner; and it cut taxes on some oilfields by 50%, creating an independent body for managing oil and gas

concessions. The first litmus test will likely come later this year with the attempted sale of stakes in the SIR refinery.

Namibia - a country that has never produced a barrel - is the newest venue reaching the investment radar screen.

That's because it has potential for new discoveries at a time when they are increasingly hard to come by.

Even better when it's in an investor-friendly regime.

The so-called "Land of the Brave" has an oil and gas friendly regime with only 5% royalties.

### ■ The exploration activities

That's why Exxon (NYSE:XOM) recently acquired an additional 7 million net acres from the government for a block extending from the shoreline to about 135 miles offshore in water depths up to 13,000 feet, with exploration activities to begin by the end of this year.

What Exxon's banking on is that Namibia, which according to theory once fit together with Brazil, shares the same geology as Brazil's pre-salt basins, Santos and Campos, which have already proved resource-rich, according to Deloitte.

Namibia's Kavango Basin is part of the Karoo SuperGroup geology, and it's also considered to have the same depositional environment as Shell's Whitehill Permian

shale play in South Africa.

Kavango is a 6.3-million-acre basin that potentially holds undeveloped shale and conventional plays. The entire basin is owned by a junior company called Reconnaissance Energy Africa (RECO.V) that recently received a 90% interest in the Petroleum Exploration Permit for the Kavango basin. The remaining 10% is owned by the Namibian state petroleum company.

When Reconnaissance Energy Africa took aeromagnetic data from the basin to the go-to geophysical interpreter Bill Cathey, according to Reconnaissance, Cathey said the data showed up to a 30,000 foot sedimentary basin.

The exploration permit is for 25,000 square kilometers (6.3 million acres). Usually, many companies hold the rights to such a large area whereas the Kavango is held by one company, Reconnaissance Energy Africa.

The reason for Reconnaissance Energy Africa (RECO.V) to take a chance on this is the fact that Kavango likely holds similar geology, deposited by the same Permian seaway, as Shell's massive Permian shale play in South Africa, one of the top 10 shale plays in the world.

Recon is targeting for the same Permian shales at the lower portion of the Karoo SuperGroup.

So far, Recon's interpretation suggests that Kavango could be a big shale play in the Karoo SuperGroup of rocks.

When it comes to exploration, Africa is one of the final frontiers for oil investors. And if it's a junior explorer who makes a discovery and ends up sitting on a viable shale play, that becomes leverage for investors.

There are a lot of new companies in Namibia, but none with an entire basin as large as this. Not only do they own the entire basin, but Reconnaissance Energy Africa (RECO.V) also has a 4-year exploration license for the basin, leading to a 25-year production license if there is a commercial production discovery.

(Source: [oilprice.com](http://oilprice.com))

Nigeria has long been known for its oil riches.

Angola has too, but decades of entrenched corruption have chased foreign investors away.

Now Namibia is joining the African oil conversation with one of the most oil-friendly regimes on the continent. It's offering 5% royalties on what might just be a very productive shale play in Reconnaissance Africa's (RECO.V) Kavango Basin.

Emerging markets are where oil upside might be found these days but navigating them is a challenge.

As Africa's largest producer of oil, Nigeria has outsized status in the hydrocarbons world. But the party is coming to an end from an investor's standpoint.

Nigeria is home to about 37 billion barrels in oil reserves. And while it's got some 32 active oil rigs out there, only 81 wells were completed last year - down from 141 in 2014.

Since oil prices started tumbling in 2014, the government has been taking more from oil companies, with back taxes and new legislation. Now, it wants majors Chevron, Shell and French Total SA to pay them around \$62 billion. It claims in was short-changed under a revenue-sharing agreement dating back to the 1990s.

Now, Nigeria is proposing new legislation that would increase taxation on the oil industry. The bill would add another 3-10 percent in royalty rates at oil prices between \$50 and \$80 per barrel. Nigeria's current system gives Nigeria between 60 percent and 70 percent of all deepwater revenues, which includes taxes, royalties, along with state-run Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation's share of production.

### ■ Africa's second-largest producer

Angola, too, is a tough sell right now. Even though it's Africa's second-largest producer, it's been mired in decades of highly entrenched corruption, and while there is a new regime in power and reforms are on the books, investors aren't 100-percent sold on the idea.



## What happens to nuclear waste from power plants?

African countries looking to invest in nuclear energy as a source of clean electricity should consider Europe's struggles with disposing of radioactive waste.

Seventy years after the nuclear age began, no country has built a place to safely store its waste, a report published this week warns, raising concerns for governments mulling nuclear power as an alternative to fossil fuels.

More than 60,000 tons of highly radioactive waste in the form of spent nuclear fuel rods are stored in interim sites across Europe, according to the World Nuclear Waste Report, some in old facilities that are running out of capacity and are expected to be used for decades longer than planned. Finland is the only country building a permanent repository underground for nuclear waste that emits large amounts of radiation for tens of thousands of years, according to the report published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation — which is affiliated with the German Green party.

"We are talking about time frames that are beyond the human scale of what we can think of," said Arne Jungjohann, political scientist and lead editor of the report. "We still don't know where to put the waste safely in a way that nobody will get harmed, that it is not vulnerable to terrorist attacks, that it is not being stolen to build nuclear bombs."



At the dawn of the nuclear age, radioactive material was diluted and dumped in the environment, before governments moved towards containing it securely underground. But projects from the 1960s onwards only met high safety expectations "to a very limited extent, if at all," according to the report.

That raises difficult questions for developing countries looking to get into nuclear.

### ■ Nuclear Power in Africa

Africa's urban population is set to double in the next three decades, massively boosting demand for infrastructure and energy. Just half of Africans had access to electricity in 2017, compared to a global average of 88%, World Bank data shows.

Eager to connect citizens with electricity grids, but anxious to avoid high-emissions of Western countries, some governments are exploring nuclear as a way to supply cheap and stable energy.

South Africa is the only country on the continent that currently operates a nuclear plant, but about a dozen others are considering, planning or building them, according to the World Nuclear Association. Several countries — Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia — have signed partnership agreements with Russian nuclear energy company Rosatom, a paper published in the journal Issues in Science and Technology found earlier this year, and others have contracts with China.

As well as increasing the sheer volume of electricity they generate, African states are also keen to make their supply more reliable. Countries such as Nigeria and Ghana struggle with power outages that see citizens turning to back-up diesel generators that pollute the air.

Nuclear energy could play a supplementary role in Africa, said Precious Akanonu, research fellow at the Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa. "Until we gradually wean out of fossil fuel dependence... nuclear energy would be useful to avoid overdependence on one source that is vulnerable to shocks."

Nuclear power has divided environmentalists. Some see it as a vital part of the transition away from fossil fuels, and, as such, a necessary tool to curb CO2 emissions and avoid catastrophic global warming. In countries such as Germany, where the government pledged to phase out nuclear energy after the Fukushima disaster in 2011, critics suggest the loss of nuclear has kept the country hooked on coal and on track to miss its CO2 pledges under the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

But attempts to deal with nuclear waste have so far faltered. Excluding Russia and Slovakia due to poor data, the report found that just four countries — France, the UK, Ukraine and Germany — are responsible for more than half of Europe's nuclear waste, and none have yet found a deep underground store to hold it over centuries.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation report found many governments underestimate the cost of storing waste and decommissioning reactors, with inconsistent rules shifting the financial burden from plant operators onto future generations of taxpayers.

Unsolved nuclear waste is the "defeating argument against entering into the nuclear age," said Rebecca Harms, a former Member of the European Parliament who was behind the report. "African countries should consider the nuclear legacies which have been created during the last 50, 60 years and for which we have no solutions."

Demand for energy in Sub-Saharan Africa is set to rise by 60 percent in the next two decades, but nuclear sources are projected to meet only a small fraction of this, according to the Africa Energy Outlook 2019, a report from the International Energy Agency (IEA) published on Thursday.

"What we see in the future economic development of sub-Saharan Africa will be powered by a mix of renewables and natural gas," said Kieran McNamara, senior energy analyst at the IEA and co-author of the report. "Nuclear just doesn't feature."

(Source: DP)

# Khashoggi murder: Stink of doubt likely to linger after Saudi ruling

The impression given has been of a Saudi government scrambling to cover up a murder after its every step was exposed by Turkey.

By Dominic Waghorn

The Saudi regime appears to have been scrambling to cover up a disastrous murder.

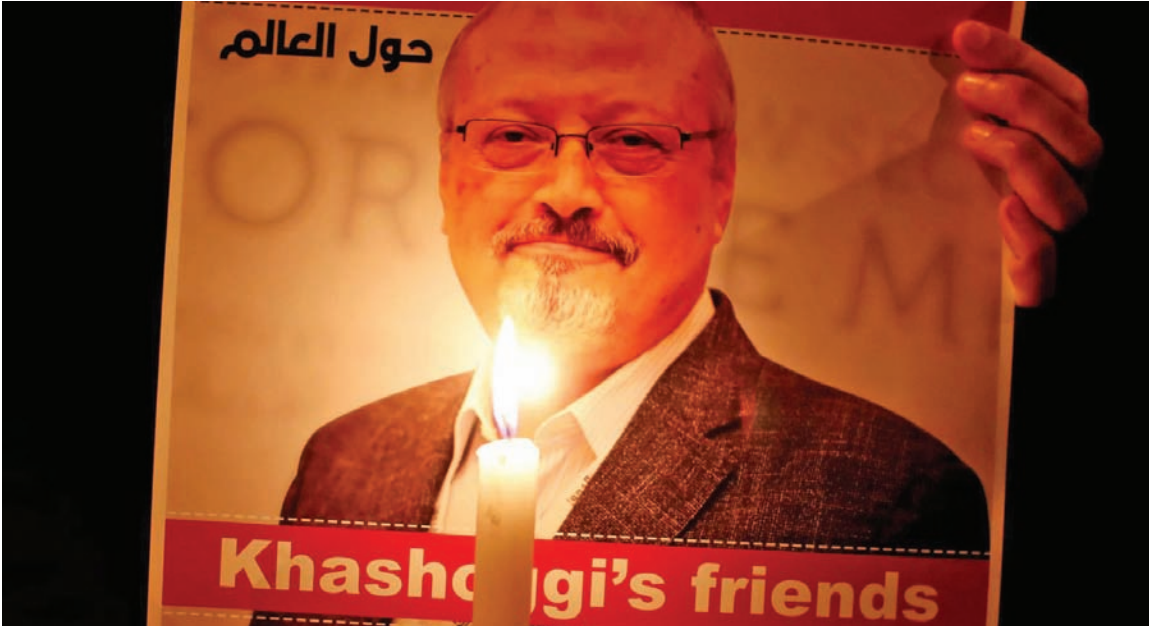
For 17 days after Jamal Khashoggi's disappearance and brutal murder, the Saudi government insisted the journalist had walked out of the Istanbul consulate unharmed. Only then did they start coming up with different stories.

He was accidentally killed in a fight, they said. Then that the team sent to bring him home killed him in a rogue operation.

The latest Saudi ruling concluded there was no prior intention to kill Jamal Khashoggi. The Saudis now claim a number of unnamed individuals were responsible and have been sentenced to death for it. But they have gone back on their admission it was premeditated in this latest ruling, concluding there was no prior intention to kill Mr Khashoggi. The impression given has been of a government scrambling to cover up a disastrous murder, after its every step was exposed by Turkish intelligence, whose cameras and microphones were able to catalogue the outrage in a way the Saudis never anticipated.

After a litany of such contradictory explanations, you might conclude the credibility of the Saudi state over the October 2018 murder counts for the square root of nothing. Compounding that skepticism is our knowledge of the way Saudi Arabia operates. It is an absolute monarchy with power newly centralized even further under its autocratic Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

It is unthinkable in the minds of many that he did not know what was being done to the journalist. The CIA concluded with "medium to high confidence" that the Crown Prince personally targeted the journalist and probably ordered his death. The UN Special Rapporteur Agnes Callamard reached a similar conclusion. She tweeted her reaction to the trial's outcome: "The masterminds not only walk free. They have barely been touched by the investigation and the trial."



The Saudi regime appears to have been scrambling to cover up a disastrous murder.

"That is the antithesis of Justice. It is a mockery." One such alleged mastermind is Saud al Qahtani, close confidante to the prince. Recordings made by Turkish intelligence during the killing, allegedly reveal al Qahtani directing the operation on Skype.

It's also claimed that the hit squad said to al Qahtani "tell your boss" after the murder had been completed. And yet the Saudi judicial system decided there was no evidence with which to try al Qahtani. His boss is and was the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. MBS, as he is known, has survived the affair but not without consequences. There are misgivings in western governments about his judgement and the Khashoggi killing has dented investor confidence too.

Observers say the recent disappointing initial public offering of Saudi oil giant Aramco is partly down to concern over the murder and its aftermath's handling by the Saudi government. Saudi Arabia will be hoping these death sentences announced in a week when most governments and many observers are on holiday will draw a line under the disastrous Khashoggi affair with a minimum of scrutiny. But the stink of doubt and imputed guilt is likely to linger on. As veteran Saudi diplomat Turki al Faisal told me this week in London: "His death was a devastating blow and as I tell everybody, it's a stigma we have to bear, and will have to continue to bear. "In 50 years' time we'll still have the Khashoggi stigma to bear."

(Source: Sky News)

## It is exactly 4 years of Sheikh Nimr martyrdom

By Abdullahi Junaidu

**NIGERIA/ KATSINA** — On October 2014, Sheikh Nimr was sentenced to death by bloodthirsty Wahhabi barbarians Saudi regime accusing him of promoting violence in the country, the brainless Saudi regime consider awareness of innocent to know their right and demand for their freedom as promoting violence, what they want from innocent citizens is to keep silent while they continue to take resources from their land without giving them what they are entitled to and allowing to practice their religious based on their perception.

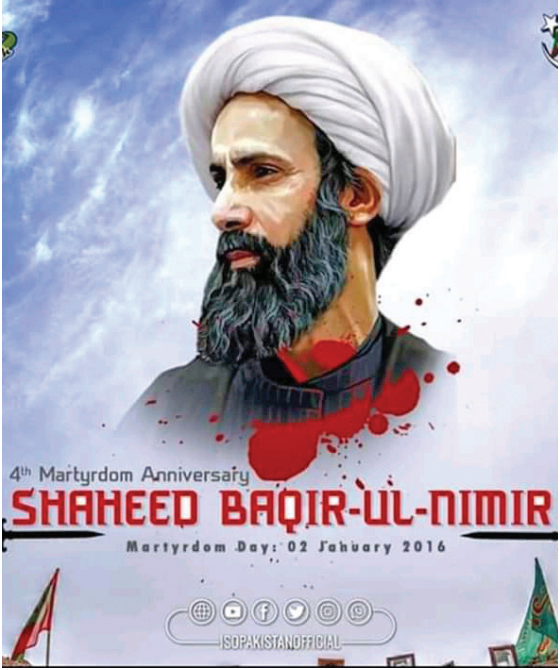
Sheikh Nimr had never tolerated this kind of inhumane mistreatment, so they consider him as their enemy

Sheikh Nimr was pure Shi'ah of Imam Hussein, he applied the notion that says: 'Haihata minnazzil-lah' he never take any humiliation from bloodthirsty Saudi regime, he prefer to die in dignity than to live in humiliation.

On 2nd January 2016 Sheikh Nimr and 46 from his Followers were beheaded by bloodthirsty Saudi regime, their corpses were denied to their families

This merciless and brutal murder was vehemently condemned all over the globe by the lovers of humanity.

There is no regime now throughout the globe that consider beheading of innocent citizens as game play



like Wahhabi barbarians Saudi regime.

They consider anyone that deviate from their foolish Wahhabi ideology as their enemy, to them, whoever criticize the way they rule, supposed to be beheaded, this is the ideology of Wahhabi students all over the globe.

In Nigeria, Wicked mass murderer tyrant President Buhari brutally massacred 1000+ children, men and women and wickedly dumped their dead bodies in mass grave, the first class group of people that celebrated this heinous crime overtly were Wahhabi disciples, those that paraded themselves as Wahhabi clerics boasted and commended Criminal Buhari over killing innocent Shi'ah citizens.

In the Globe, all these terrorist groups; ISIS, DAESH & Boko Haram whosen primary duty is to kill and declare other Muslims as infidels are from Wahhabi school of taught

The problem of Islam now is Wahhabism.

I repeat, the only problem of Islam now is WAHHABISM, what they are doing is blackmailing Islam in sight of others, presenting Islam in bad portrait.

On my final note, i want to these bloodthirsty Saudi regime to be rest assured that, there will be a time for them to crumble, oppression will never last, and the pure blood of Martyr Nimr will never go in vain, it will revive the spirit of other innocents to raise and demand for Justice.

## Australia deploys military aircraft & navy ships to help fire-ravaged communities



A fire in New South Wales, Australia © AFP / SAEED KHAN

Australia has sent military aircraft and ships to relieve towns that have been caught in the violent infernos sweeping the country's southeast coast. Thousands of people have been forced to camp on beaches as they await rescue.

Wednesday's deployment used military helicopters and naval vessels to deliver water, food and fuel to areas that have been completely cut off by the fires in the states of New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria.

An estimated 4,000 people in the Victorian coastal town of Mallacoota fled to the seashore on Tuesday, after winds pushed wildfires toward their homes.

The Australian Defense Force is

sending navy ships to Mallacoota on a supply mission that is expected to last two weeks, Victoria Emergency Commissioner Andrew Crisp told local media. He said firefighters would be flown into the area via helicopter, since the roads are no longer accessible.

The massive bushfires have destroyed more than four million hectares (10 million acres). High winds and extreme heat have sparked new blazes almost daily. The fires have claimed 12 lives since the beginning of October.

Australian government officials have called for assistance from the US and Canada to help contain the fires.

(Source: RT)

## At least 20 high-speed railways expected to open in 2020 in China



The first high-speed rail in Ningxia Hui autonomous region, linking its capital city, Yinchuan to Wuzhong and Zhongwei city, was put into operation on Dec 29. [Photo provided to chinadaily.com.cn]

At least 20 high-speed railways are expected to start operation in 2020, according to Economic View's calculation.

The Yinchuan-Xi'an high-speed railway is expected to open at the end of 2020. The trip between Yinchuan, capital of Ningxia Hui autonomous region, and Xi'an, capital of Northwest China's Shaanxi province, will be shortened from 14 hours to 3 hours.

The Beijing-Shenyang high-speed railway, a line of around 698 kilometers, is expected to open at the end of 2020. Trips between Beijing and Shenyang, capital of Northeast China's Liaoning province, will be halved to 2.5 hours.

The Taiyuan-Jiaozuo high-speed railway is expected to open in December 2020. The trip between Taiyuan, capital of North China's Shanxi province, and Zhengzhou, capital of Central China's Henan province, will halved to 2 hours.

The Weifang-Laixi high-speed railway is expected to open at the end of 2020 within East China's Shandong province. It will shorten the trip between the provincial capital Ji'nan and Yantai to 2 hours.

In 2019, more than 5,000 km of high-speed railways went into operation. The total length of China's high-speed railways has reached 35,000 km.

(Source: China Daily)



# Who is sowing chaos in Iraq?

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has strongly condemned the deadly American air raids that targeted the positions of Iraq's Hashd al-Sha'abi forces, saying Washington is in fact taking revenge on the popular forces because of the key role they played in defeating the Daesh terror group. "You are witnessing what they [the Americans] are doing in Iraq and Syria. They are taking revenge on Hashd al-Sha'abi because it paralyzed and [eventually] eliminated Daesh, which they [the Americans] had created and nurtured," the Leader said.

The Leader made the remarks in reference to the latest US military aggression, which has drawn a wave of damning reactions from officials and movements across the region, and triggered furious public protests outside the US Embassy compound in Baghdad on Tuesday.

As many as 31 fighters from the popular forces lost their lives and dozens more sustained injuries in the US airstrikes that targeted their bases in Anbar Province, in western Iraq, near Syria's border, late Sunday.

As always, not only are America's actions and responses deeply ironic, but they're also endemic of a deeper opportunism and failure to comprehend the realities of the country. Iraq is a Shia majority country which gives Iran, also a Shia majority country, a historic and an organic affinity to it. In tandem with this, Washington's unilateral pressure campaign against Tehran is naturally seen as an affront against Shia Islam which inevitably escalates anti-American sentiment within Iraq.



They fail to understand that the more aggressive against Iran and Shia groups they become, the more hate they will receive from the public in Iraq. Playing the Iran card is easy, but the end product will be that America will be vacuumed into yet another Middle Eastern quagmire which will inflict further damage on its global credibility and reputation.

Iraq is an unstable country owing to its invasion by the US in 2003. In over 100 years, little has changed, with Western countries continuing to place strategy and economic interest over a feasible and pragmatic resolu-

tion to the country's woes. Repeated military interventions have only served to exacerbate, rather than to seriously address fragile governance and sectarian conflict.

While ISIL was largely defeated in 2018, Washington's unilateral and illegitimate pressure campaign against Iran, and opt for repeated escalation, has induced unrest among Iraq's Shia population. Religious affinity and geography make Iranian influence in Iraq, inevitable and natural. The White House's idea that they can "remove this" is fanciful. US foreign policymakers have underesti-

mated how their recent actions have induced anti-American sentiment among Shia Muslims. Therefore, when a drone strike targeted a popular group against the sovereign will of the Iraqi government, they provoked a belligerent response from locals. Saying that Iran is responsible is false, as it is dismissive of sentiment on the ground. While it works to a Western audience (as the mainstream media is supporting Washington's narratives) it does not change anything on the ground.

The result is that the White House, blaming Iran, is likely to escalate further by some means. They are using it as political capital in their anti-Tehran campaign, using the low hanging fruit and racially induced stereotypes of "terror" to make their case. This may induce a disturbing and worrying start to 2020.

This fails to acknowledge the lessons of history. Every American intervention or kinetic action in Iraq has ended in disaster to the extent it has sowed the seeds of greater instability, and thus created a new crisis building up to yet another intervention.

Consequently, the United States is stuck in a never-ending aggressive quagmire in Iraq. Disinterested in the country's political, social and sectarian realities, opportunistic geopolitical goals continue to lead to catastrophic decision-making which exacerbates greater conflict, chaos and unrest.

A potential path to conflict with Iran will not make the situation go away, and will not change Iraq for what it is. Looking at the bigger picture, the protesters have a point in hoping that America will "go away."

## Trump may have given Iran an unintended assist

**1 →** The fact may be that the U.S. has been bound to screw up, and has and is screwing up, in the Middle East because its bottom line aim, aside from giving the Zionists carte blanche, has been perpetual chaos and conflict in the region, and in turn, the nurture of the U.S. economy with the maintenance of regional hegemony and arms sales. Given all the utterly bizarre things the U.S. has done, including the trashing of the JCPOA, there really is no other explanation. And maybe, at last, Iraqis fully realize this. Iran and Syria have known this clearly for many years.



Just at the moment when it appears some in the U.S. is angling more than ever to find cause to set the region aflame (and yet others may realize it cannot without grave consequences to itself and its allies), and may have begun just that, in part because Iran has become increasingly influential, it is also quite possible that the U.S. is about to lose much of the Middle East altogether. This may begin with the loss of Iraq when and if a solid new government emerges that is widely acceptable across the diverse country.

Take, for example, the recent four-day naval military drills in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman between Iran, Russia and China. It is the very first time the Islamic Republic has engaged in joint naval drills with two major world powers, and this despite the harsh sanctions. (At the same time Iran has also been trying to limit its economic dependence on oil exports.) This is an almost breathtaking achievement for Iran! And it points to burgeoning losses for the U.S. in the Middle East: more loss of influence and control. And the drills have also exposed, as never before, that even though Iran has been surrounded by on all sides by U.S. bases and an estimated total of more than 60,000 troops, these bases and troops are beginning to look like a U.S. liability because they are all so exposed to military retaliation whether by Iran or its Iraqi, Syrian and Hezbollah allies.

The U.S. seems to have just this past week moved the focus of protests in Iraq away from political corruption and the growth of Iranian influence to the obvious violation of Iraqi sovereignty. Make no mistake: it can be argued that Iraqis are far most likely to reject yet more American attacks on Iraq and the American troop presence than they are to reject Iranian influence.

The U.S. may well have given Iran an unintended assist in the Middle East amid all the dangers. Trump may be a fool. He may be more or less incompetent with his even more foolish appointees like Mike Pompeo, but even in the U.S. wiser voices are saying that the President who earlier claimed he was going to drain the "swamp" that is Washington (and was probably elected on that promise and others) has actually become the swamp himself. He will lose the election next November if he starts another kinetic war, particularly a war on Iran, and in the recesses of whatever mind he may have, he must be aware of this. Note that after he threatened the Islamic Republic with dire consequences, and blamed Iran for the storming of the Baghdad embassy, he fast turned around a day later and said he was disinterested in starting such a war and appeared to back down. Sending yet more troops to the Middle East makes no sense to this very confused President.

## Washington insists on not recognizing multipolar world: American analyst

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — A former US Senate foreign policy analyst described a recent decision by Washington to impose sanctions on companies working on a Russian natural gas export pipeline to Europe as "bullying" and said the US insists on not recognizing the multipolar world.

"Yes, it's bullying and intensification but of something that was already there and has been steadily growing," Washington-based political analyst James Jatrass told Tasnim, referring to the US sanctions concerning the Nord Stream 2 (NS2) gas pipeline.

"We live in a de facto multipolar world but Washington insists on not recognizing that fact," he said, adding, "If wiser heads prevailed in Washington, we'd welcome the development of a multipolar order, similar to the 'Long Peace' in Europe between 1815 and 1914, when a 'concert' of the European powers avoided a major conflict."

James George Jatrass is Deputy Director of the American Institute in Ukraine, a privately funded American NGO. Based in Washington, DC, he is a former US diplomat and advisor to the US Senate Republican leadership.

The full text of the interview with Jatrass is as follows: **■** The US, with its "America First" policy, has moved away from its allies over the past two years and diminished US international participation in international organizations. First, Washington urged its NATO allies to bear the costs of the transatlantic alliance, then it pressured South Korea and Japan, and now the EU is under US pressures. In your opinion, can this change of approach be interpreted as a new trend in the world order?

A: No, it's not a new trend, it's simply the intensification of the old US insistence of domination of its so-called allies, which are really satellites. Trump seemed to understand in 2016 that this approach was counterproductive when he was a candidate in 2016, but for all practical purposes he has adopted the failed policies of the past, simply in a more militant form. For example, in 2016, he correctly pronounced NATO "obsolete," but now, he pressures Europeans to pay for "defense" they don't need. Likewise with his "maximum pressure" campaigns against North Korea and Iran, which (especially in the case of Iran) are really aimed at our allies. Europe also wants to improve ties with Russia – as Trump also said he wanted in 2016 – but sanctions on companies working on Nord Stream 2 are aimed at preventing that. Especially with his weakened position due to impeachment, his ability and perhaps his desire to change course is almost nil. Now we'll see if he gets maneuvered in to a war with Iran.

**■** Many analysts do not attribute these moves by the

US government to Donald Trump, but rather they think the US is trying to save capitalism and the American economy from collapse. Do you agree?

A: There may be some element of economic thinking – for example energy companies that expect to make money selling "freedom gas" to Europe if we can sink NS2 – but that isn't the major concern. The people in both the Executive Branch (Trump's appointees as well as bureaucrats) and in Congress seek world domination for its own sake. If asked, they couldn't begin to tell you how their policies make Americans more prosperous – because they don't though some companies profit. Most of them really believe that Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China are "threats" to us, as they view every country that isn't reduced to vassal status. So they press forward in an unthinking mechanical fashion, telling lies all the way to justify themselves. Hence, "maximum" pressure against North Korea, Iran and more or less the same approach to Russia and, in a building campaign, against China (more difficult because US and Chinese economies are so linked). In each case the goal is regime change and installation of a puppet government, and in the case of Russia (and maybe China and Iran) breaking the country into pieces. US policymakers can think of no other way to view non-satellite countries, which they consider inherently illegitimate.

**■** As you know, in the US defense budget for the 2020 fiscal year, there have been some cases of interference in the internal affairs of its European allies such as the US sanctions concerning the Nord Stream 2 (NS2) gas pipeline. Don't you interpret this shift in US policy and the direct interference as a move to sacrifice European interests for its own benefits? Isn't that a kind of bullying and totalitarianism by the US?

A: Yes, it's bullying and intensification but of something that was already there and has been steadily growing. Even in the mid-1990s, not long after the USSR collapsed and the US essentially controlled the Yeltsin government in Russia, the US was already formulating a strategy centered around the "Silk Road" (from Turkey, through former Soviet Central Asia, to China) and Caspian energy to try to provide alternatives for Europe as natural energy customers of Russia. This included the (successful) Baku-Ceyhan pipeline and the (failed) Nabucco. However, this was not really about market diversification as an attempted market displacement. Now with NS2 and Turk Stream (in place of the torpedoed South Stream, a defeat the Europeans inflicted on themselves but with the US approval), plus China's driving role in Eurasian integration, they are turning up the heat to try to stop it. But to be clear, this isn't about economics per se but use of economics to try to perpetuate the fading unipolar global



domination. Whether Trump understands this is unknown and probably irrelevant.

**■** Given the US foreign policy and the reactions from its rivals, like China and Russia, and allies, including France and Germany, what do you think about the future of world order?

A: We live in a de facto multipolar world but Washington insists on not recognizing that fact. If wiser heads prevailed in Washington, we'd welcome the development of a multipolar order, similar to the "Long Peace" in Europe between 1815 and 1914, when a "concert" of the European powers avoided a major conflict. As was the case of Britain then, the US still could play the leading role as "first among equals" for a long time. But the US establishment won't accept that other powers – starting with Russia and China, but also including others like India, Japan, Iran, Turkey – have legitimate interests in their own regions that are not subject to US approval. This is unlike Britain in the 19th century, which understood that France, Germany, Russia, etc., had legitimate interests and it was best to avoid conflict between spheres of influence (e.g. the Wakhan corridor in Afghanistan between the British and Russian empires, the neutrality of Siam between British Burma and French Indochina). As inherently the most secure of the major powers, the US could accommodate the spheres of others (for example, Iran's interest in the Persian Gulf) but refuses to do so. Since the US establishment – Trump or no Trump – is incapable of changing course, that means the matter is likely to be decided by some unforeseen future crisis: either a major financial and economic collapse, which forces the US to retract whether the establishment wants to or not, or a global conflict, a nuclear 1914 (for which all parties are now preparing), possibly as the result of someone's miscalculation.

## We are all Soleimani today

**1 →** Truth be told, it is difficult to imagine Iran without Gen. Soleimani. It is difficult to find someone who would match him in bravery, charisma, oratory and revolutionary ideals. It is difficult to accept the reality that he is no longer with us. But, as one of my friends remarked, his death does not mean victory for the oppressor. It is a moral victory for the oppressed, a badge of honor for the fallen hero of oppressors. The revolution is very much alive and his blood will infuse new life in it and inspire many more revolutionaries in times to come.

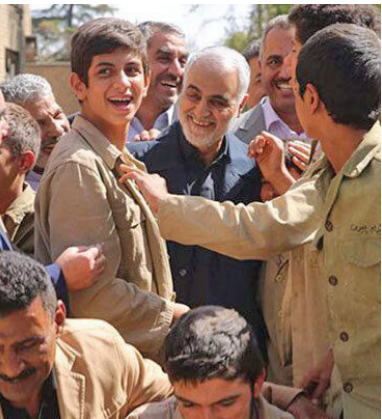
It is important to know that the man who bravely took on the Americans, Zionists and ISIS had a beautiful heart, which was evident from his private life. He was a family man who respected his parents and loved his children. He could be seen praying and crying silently during his visits to Imam Reza shrine Mashhad. In one of the videos circulated online, he is seen addressing a gathering at a martyr's funeral and making soul-stirring supplications. In his public meetings, his affable and easy-going nature was there for everyone to see.

In the wee hours of Friday morning,

when the news about the martyrdom of this brave commander broke out, my heart skipped a beat. It can't be true, I tried to reassure myself. I checked multiple sources to confirm the news and my worst fears came true. My first thought went to the Supreme Leader, who lost his most loyal and dedicated soldier. More than anyone else, it is a big loss for him. As someone very rightly remarked, Ali has lost Malik Ashter.

As a testimony of his astounding popularity, thousands of people poured into the streets in different cities of Iran to mourn the death of their 'Sardar Soleimani'. People chanted 'Death to America' and 'Death to Israel' and vowed to take revenge for his death. Even the Supreme Leader said there would be 'severe retaliation' for this dastardly and cowardly act of war. This act cannot go unpunished.

It remains to be seen how Iran will respond but the response will be fitting and at the time and place of its own choosing. Gen. Qaani, a close aide of Gen. Soleimani, has been announced as his successor but he has a very big boots to fill and a difficult task ahead. To come out of the shadow of Gen.



Soleimani, who was a larger than life figure, his successor has a long way to go.

This is perhaps the most difficult obituary I had to write because I am overwhelmed with emotions. It is a personal loss. I lost a real life hero, someone who inspired me in ways no one else did. He may not be physically with us anymore but he has left an illustrious legacy that will inspire millions in the future in every part of the world. Soleimani is not dead. We are all Soleimani today.

### First Announcement



N.I.S.O.C

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# India approves third Moon mission, months after landing failure

India has approved its third lunar mission months after its last one failed to successfully land on the Moon, its space agency said on Wednesday, the latest effort in its ambitions to become a low-cost space power.

The Chandrayaan-3 mission will have a lander and a rover, but not an orbiter, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K. Sivan told reporters at its headquarters in Bengaluru, according to an official telecast.

The Chandrayaan-2 mission in September successfully deployed a lunar orbiter that relays scientific data back to Earth, but was unable to place a rover on the lunar surface after a “hard” landing.

That mission had aimed to land on the south pole of the Moon, where no other lunar mission had gone before. The region is believed to contain water as craters in the region are largely unaffected by the high temperatures of the Sun.

ISRO had hoped to confirm the presence of water in the form of ice, first detected on its mission in 2008.

Chandrayaan-3 will have a “similar configuration” as the previous mission, Sivan said.

Only the United States, Russia and China have landed on the Moon. Beijing’s Chang’e-4 probe touched down on the far side of the Moon last year.

India’s third lunar mission will likely launch in 2020 and will cost less than its previous mission, the PTI news agency reported on Tuesday, citing Jitendra Singh, junior minister for the department of space.

Sivan also said ISRO was making “good progress” for its human space-flight mission slated for late 2021, adding that four astronauts had been picked for training, which will be planned later this month. The project, called Gaganyaan, would cost less than 100 billion rupees (\$1.4 billion), the government said in 2018.



India has developed a reputation for pioneering affordable satellite launches and space missions. Its unmanned Mars mission in 2014 cost just \$74 million, less than the budget of the Hollywood space blockbuster “Gravity”.

Sivan also announced that ISRO had begun the land acquisition process for a second spaceport in the southern port city of Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu state.

(Source: Reuters)

## New device in New Mexico turns back clock on astronomy



A newly forged steel instrument that can pinpoint the path of stars and planets across the night sky using the naked eye is a throwback to the years just before the advent of telescopes, returning stargazers in the hills of northern New Mexico to the essentials of astronomy in the past.

Installed at St. John’s College by graduates, the device is a remake of long-lost originals devised by Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe in the late 16th century to chart the location of stars and the orbits of planets.

It consists of four interlocking rings — forged of precision steel and aligned with the north star and equator — combined with a sliding viewfinder that is moved by hand to measure angles between the any celestial object, the horizon and the equator.

Lengthy, painstaking measurements from such an instrument in the late-1500s allowed Johannes Kepler to show that Mars revolved in an elliptical orbit around the sun, disproving the entrenched theory of the circular movement of heavenly bodies and setting off a search of new theories of planetary motion and forces.

“You can often learn things about how science was done in another age by recreating the artifacts and recreating the instruments,” said William Donahue, a retired faculty member and laboratories director at St. John’s College, whose campus overlooks Santa Fe. “This is a lot of fun because you get to do things that nobody has done for 300 years.”

None of Brahe’s original instruments have survived. Graduates of St. John’s commissioned a functioning replica using Brahe’s original drawings and illustrations. They hired British craftsman David Harber

to assemble a precision instrument from surgical stainless steel. The venture cost upwards of \$100,000, Donahue said.

Static sculptures of Brahe’s so-called armillary sphere proliferate in public parks, but few if any allow for detailed measurements like the one in Santa Fe. It is accurate to incremental angular measurements of one-sixtieth of a degree, or 1 arc minute.

The device is an obvious anachronism in an age of sky-charting smart phone apps — and a fitting addition to St. John’s College, where students trace the evolution of math and science from ancient civilizations by studying original texts or their English translations.

Beyond St. John’s, New Mexico’s dark cloudless skies have attracted groundbreaking astronomical devices and student observatories.

They include New Mexico Tech’s Magdalena Ridge Observatory, perched 2 miles (3 kilometers) above sea level near Socorro; a cluster of research telescopes at Apache Point Observatory; the iconic Very Large Array radio astronomy observatory where antennae span miles across the Plains of San Agustin; and recently assembled radio scopes that explore low frequencies for clues about cosmic evolution.

By contrast, the latest stargazing device in Santa Fe promises no scientific advances. Instead, it’s something of a time portal into the travails of 16th century astronomy.

Donahoe, who translated Kepler’s “Astronomia Nova” from Latin, says pinpointing the coordinates of bright stars and planets produces lots of “ah-hah moments” for student. The sphere is not yet part of the college curriculum.

(Source: AP News)

## International Space Station astronauts play with fire for research



Playing with fire can be dangerous and never more so than when confined in a space capsule floating 250 miles above the Earth. But in the past week astronauts onboard the International Space Station have intentionally lit a series of blazes in research designed to study the behavior of flames in zero gravity.

The scientists behind the experiment, called Confined Combustion, say it will help improve fire safety on the ISS and on future lunar missions by helping predict how a blaze might progress in low gravity conditions.

Dr. Paul Ferkul, of the Universities Space Research Association, who is working on the project, said: “That is the immediate and most practical goal since NASA can use the knowledge to improve material selection and fire safety strategies.”

On Earth, gravity pulls colder denser air down to the base of the flame, displacing hot air, which rises. This process feeds fresh oxygen to the fire and the upward flow of hot air gives the flame its characteristic teardrop shape.

In zero gravity, flames can be spherical, or can be elongated by external flows of air. The latest experiments are not the first to set things ablaze inside the ISS, but are studying the process in more detail.

“Removing gravity eliminates natural convection; the hot air isn’t going up because there is no ‘up,’” said Ferkul.

Instead the experiments, which began on Christmas Eve, involve a fan blowing air through the box to provide oxygen.

The experiments are testing two fuels — fabric comprised of cotton and fiberglass, and clear acrylic plastic sheets — and testing

how different air flows and sizes of box alter the combustion rates. The fires are lit inside a box within a box, to ensure safety. In the 15 experiments conducted so far the flame has burned for between one and 22 minutes.

According to Ferkul, the astronauts love getting to burn stuff. “They really enjoy the experiments because they’re so hands on,” he said. “We get to talk to the astronauts while they’re doing it.”

Previous work by the same team has revealed that, contrary to expectations, some materials would be more flammable on the moon due to the lower buoyancy. This is because for some materials, the convection flow is so fast that it extinguishes the flame on Earth. However, when transferred to the moon, the flow could hit a sweet spot where it is fast enough to draw in fresh oxygen but not so fast that the fire is blown out. The experiments are designed to provide better predictions of how different materials behave in low gravity environments.

“Living on the moon is a different environment from space station and Earth, and fires will behave differently there,” said Ferkul. “There’s reason to believe that fires could be more dangerous on the moon than on Earth.”

The experiments could also give new insights into the basic science of combustion, such as the chemistry of soot formation and how gas radiates from flames. “The equations become significantly easier if we get rid of buoyancy,” said Ferkul. “We can look at some of the underlying physics that is sometimes masked by buoyancy. Soot is a very difficult thing to unravel.”

(Source: The Guardian)

## Winter wonderland in Canada is photographed from 254 miles above the Earth

A wintry scene of icy shorelines and froze landscapes was captured from 254 miles above Earth.

NASA astronaut aboard the International Space Station snapped a stunning image of a full moon rising over the Hudson Bay in northern Canada.

The picture, which was taken at 1PM ET on December 12, reveals just how dark this part of the country is during the winter months.

The image shows an area around an icy shoreline and the surrounding villages spend their day mostly in darkness.

NASA explains that the towns in Manitoba Providence receive just six to seven hours of sunlight each day throughout the entire month of December.

‘A bit farther north, the Sun will not rise above the horizon again until January,’ the space agency shared in a statement.

‘This photo, taken around 1 p.m. local time, shows just how little sunlight reaches northern Canada during a winter day.’

The image was taken with a Nikon D5 Electronic Still Camera by an astronaut part of the Expedition 61 Crew — NASA does not share the photographer’s name.

Manitoba Providence sits between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and is east to Ontario.

This area is littered to more than 100,000 lakes including Lake Winnipeg, one of the world’s largest inland bodies of fresh water. More than two-fifths of the province’s land area is forested.

And the Hudson Bay is a spot that many polar bears call home.

‘As seasonal temperatures dropped and the hours of sunlight decreased, fast ice attached to the western shores of Hudson Bay and began spreading further south,’ NASA explains,

‘Once frozen, Hudson Bay becomes a key habitat for migrating polar bears, which spend much of their time on the ice until it starts to melt again around June.’

Astronauts aboard the ISS have shared numerous pictures of their view of Earth from space.

In May, NASA released a detailed image showing a view of the Earth transitioning from day into night, which was shot Christina Koch.

Sweeping views of the planet can be seen, as well as the Earth’s ‘shadow line,’ a rare sight wherein the division between night and day can be viewed by the naked eye.

Koch posted the photo from her personal Twitter account, noting that the out-of-this-world view can only be seen by astronauts on the ISS ‘a couple times a year.’

‘A couple times a year, the @Space\_Station orbit happens to align over the day/night shadow line on Earth,’ Koch wrote.

‘We are continuously in sunlight, never passing into Earth’s shadow from the Sun, and the Earth below us is always in dawn or dusk.’

‘Beautiful time to cloud watch. #nofilter,’ she added.

Astronauts aboard the ISS are used to spotting mesmerizing views of the Earth’s sunrises and sunsets.

The International Space Station orbits roughly 220 miles above the Earth and completes one trip around our planet every 92 minutes, according to NASA.

It travels at an astonishing 17,200 miles per hour, which allows astronauts to be able to see as many as 15 or 16 sunrises and sunsets every day.

That amounts to tens of thousands of sunsets and sunrises viewed of the course of a year. For example, retired US astronaut Scott Kelly observed 10,944 sunrises and sets during his year in space. A video shared by astronaut Ricky Arnold last year showed what it looks like to see the sun set and then rise again as the ISS orbits around Earth.

(Source: msn)

## Fish fossils show how fins became limbs

By Brooks Hays

Before early marine species could make the transition to land, they had to develop tools for getting around out of the water. They needed limbs.

Now, thanks to the discovery and study of an ancient fish fossil, scientists are beginning to understand how fins became limbs.

Using CT scans, paleontologists at the University of Chicago created digital 3D models of the fin of the fishapod species Tiktaalik roseae. Researchers described their efforts in a new paper published this week in the journal PNAS.

The study of the evolution of limbs during the Devonian period, some 375 million years ago, has mostly focused on the development of upper arm, forearm, wrist and digits -- knowledge gleaned from the study of ancient endoskeletons, the structure formed by bones and cartilage.

The latest study focuses on fishapod’s dermal skeleton, formed by the rays and spines that form the species’ fins. Because the dermal skeleton is more fragile, it’s less often found intact among ancient fish fossils.

By studying the dermal skeleton of Tiktaalik roseae, scientists were able to gain new insights into the ways early fishapod species began experimenting with limb-like appendages and new types of locomotion -- experiments that predate the emergence of full-fledged limbs and life on dry land.

“By seeing the entire fin of Tiktaalik we gain a clearer picture of how it propped itself up and moved about,” paleontologist Neil Shubin, senior author of the new study, said in a news release. “The fin had a kind of palm that could lie flush against the muddy bottoms of rivers and streams.”

By creating 3D models of the ancient fin rays, researchers were able to see that these structures were smaller than those of the species’ more fish-like predecessors. The fins had also become asymmetrical and developed palm-like muscles along their undersides.

“This provides further information that allows us to understand how an animal like Tiktaalik was using its fins in this transition,” said Thomas Stewart, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Chicago. “Animals went from swimming freely and using their fins to control the flow of water around them, to becoming adapted to pushing off against the surface at the bottom of the water.”

Researchers found the fin patterns of Tiktaalik matched those found in the fins of sturgeon and lungfish, including asymmetry of the top and bottom fins, which suggests these evolutionary experiments did more than set the stage for the transition to dry land.

“That gives us more confidence and another data set to say these patterns are real, widespread and important for fishes, not just in the fossil record as it relates to the fin-to-limb transition, but the function of fins broadly,” Stewart said.

## The human brain can locate sensation of touch beyond the body

Our brains are capable of detecting the location of touch even when it’s not directly on the body, new research shows. An intriguing new study indicates that we can sense how an object we’re holding comes into contact with something else — almost as if it were an extension of ourselves.

If you’re holding a stick that you then use to tap something else, for example, the brain appears to activate a special set of neural sensors to work out what just happened using the vibration patterns as they’re sent through our nervous system.

Of course if something we’re holding is touched, we can feel the shift in pressure as it’s passed on to our fingers — but this latest study shows how we can also figure out the exact location of the contact on the object.

“The tool is being treated like a sensory extension of your body,” neuroscientist Luke Miller, from the University of Lyon in France, told Richard Sima at Scientific American.

Across 400 different tests, Miller and his colleagues got 16 study participants to hold wooden rods, and asked them to try and determine when two taps on those rods were made in locations close to each other.

And the volunteers were surprisingly good at it: they could recognize two touches in close proximity 96 percent of the time.

During the experiments, the researchers were also using electroencephalography (EEG) equipment to record the participants’ brain activity. These scans showed that the brain uses similar neural mechanisms — specifically in the primary somatosensory cortex and the posterior parietal cortex — to detect touches on both our own skin and on objects we’re holding.

We can probably identify the location of a touch on an object before it stops vibrating, the researchers suggest; this could happen in as short a time as 20 milliseconds, based on computer models the team ran as a follow-up to the main experiment.

This isn’t a completely new idea — think of visually impaired people using a cane to sense what’s around them — but no one has previously looked into what’s happening in the brain in so much detail before.

It seems that the brain is able to decode the vibrations as they come through certain nerve endings in our skin, called the Pacinian receptors. By receiving information from these receptors in our hands, the brain parts responsible can then figure out where an object is being hit — and the researchers think we may have even adapted the way we hold tools to get better feedback on what those tools are doing.

One area where this research might be useful is in changing the way prostheses are designed: if we understand how objects between the body and the rest of the world can pass on information to our brain, we might be able to make them work better as sensors.

(Source: sciencealert.com)



## World’s first curved glass suspension bridge inaugurated in Iran

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — A suspension bridge made of curved sheets of glass, which is the first of its kind in the world, has officially been inaugurated in Ardebil province, northwest Iran, IRIB reported on Friday.

According to the report, 250 billion rials (some \$6 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been invested in the project. Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan, who was accompanied by provincial and local officials, cut the ribbon on the touristic bridge, which connects two hills in Hir district.



Measuring 220 meters in length, the bridge’s all glass parts and metal cables have been constructed by domestic engineers using high quality materials, the report said.

Ardebil tourism chief Nader Fallahi announced in late December 2019 that seventeen tourism projects, worth 1,500 billion rials (some \$35 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) is to be inaugurated in Ardebil province in the near future.

Ha said that the objective to launch tourism projects in the province is to provide tourists from all over the world and domestic tourists as well with the opportunity to use these facilities and select Ardebil as their prime destination.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

The Islamic Republic welcomed some four million foreign nationals during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 – August 22, 2019), which shows 30 percent hike, compared with the same period last year, according to official data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

## UNESCO condemns transfer of sphinxes from Luxor to Tahrir

Chair of the Arab Regional Center for World Heritage, Shaikha Mai bint Mohammad Al Khalifa, has condemned the transfer of antiquities from Luxor’s temple to be resettled in Cairo’s Tahrir Square.

In a statement shared with local news outlet Cairo24, Al Khalifa’s said that “any amendment to a site of this importance must be preceded by consulting with the UNESCO World Heritage Center, submitting reports that evaluate the impact on the site itself, and other matters stipulated in the operational guidelines of the World Heritage Convention.”

As such, the chair also suggested for experts from the Center and Egypt to meet and find an alternative solution to the proposed plan.

At the end of December, a controversial decision was issued to move four ram sphinx statues from Luxor’s processional avenue, as well as an obelisk, to Tahrir Square. However, the decision was met with criticism from experts, MP Ahmed Idris and archeologists for the damage that might occur on the archeological remains. *(Source: Egyptian Streets)*

## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Hanseatic city of Lubeck

Founded in 1143 on the Baltic coast of northern Germany, Lubeck was from 1230 to 1535 one of the principal cities of the Hanseatic League, a league of merchant cities which came to hold a monopoly over the trade of the Baltic Sea and the North Sea.

The plan of the Old Town island of Lubeck, with its blade-like outline determined by two parallel routes of traffic running along the crest of the island, dates back to the beginnings of the city and attests to its expansion as a commercial center of Northern Europe.



To the west, the richest quarters with the trading houses and the homes of the rich merchants are located, and to the east, small commerces and artisans. The very strict socio-economic organization emerges through the singular disposition of the Buden, small workshops set in the back courtyards of the rich hares, to which access was provided through a narrow network of alleyways (Gange).

Lubeck has remained an urban monument characteristic of a significant historical structure even though the city was severely damaged during the Second World War.

Almost 20% of it were destroyed, including the most famous monumental complexes- the Cathedral of Lubeck, the churches of St Peter and St Mary and especially the Grundungsviertel, the hilltop quarter where the gabled houses of the rich merchants clustered. Selective reconstruction has permitted the replacement of the most important churches and monuments.

Located at the heart of the mediaval city, the third area around St Mary’s Church, the Town Hall, and the Market Square bear the tragic scars of the heavy bombing suffered during the Second World War.

*(Source: UNESCO)*

# Porticos, arches, domes and gardens, key elements of Persian architecture

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Iran has inherited numerous architectural traditions over the course of history. The Elamite, Achaemenian, Hellenistic, and other pre-Islamic and Islamic-era dynasties have left striking stone testaments to their greatness, such as Chogha Zanbil and Persepolis—both of which were designated UNESCO World Heritage sites in 1979.

Three monastic ensembles central to the Armenian Christian faith, with an architecture representing a confluence of Byzantine, Persian, and Armenian cultures, were collectively recognized as a World Heritage site in 2008.

From the Islamic period the architectural achievements of the Seljuq, Il-Khanid, and Safavid dynasties are particularly noteworthy. During that time Iranian cities such as Neyshabur, Isfahan, and Shiraz came to be among the great cities of the Islamic world, and their many mosques, madrasahs, shrines, and palaces formed an architectural tradition that was distinctly Iranian within the larger Islamic milieu, according to Encyclopedia Britannica.

There are some elements that share between most of the monuments constructed upon Persian architecture.

### ■ The usage of iwans (porticos)

An iwan is a vaulted space that opens on one side to a courtyard. The idea of iwan developed in pre-Islamic Iran where it was used in monumental and imperial architecture.

### ■ Extensive use of arches

The two famous monuments, the Taj Mahal for the Mughal architecture and the Great Mosque of Isfahan for the Persian architecture displays the example of this fact. It is built for aesthetic reasons, as well as to place windows and to lessen the extent of sunlight to pour into the building.

### ■ Gardens, fountains, and pools

Water plays a particularly central role in Iranian design: millennia before the invention of the first water pump, Persian agricultural experts created the qanat (subterranean aqueduct) based on their hydraulic laws.

Spacious gardens and pools with fountains have always been a main feature of Persian architecture over time. In a traditional mosque, madrasa, house, it is used for ablutions, aesthetics or both.

### ■ Domes

The Persian tradition of dome-building dates back to the earliest Mesopotamian architecture when domes became an integral part of buildings due to the scarcity of wood in many areas of the Iranian plateau.

In Ancient Persia, domes were associated with the divine side of life, as their circular shape represented perfection, eternity and the heavens, according to Press TV.

Domes moved to the forefront of Persian architecture



A view of the 12th-century Jameh Mosque of Yazd (Masjid-e-Jameh Yazd) in central Iran.

during the Sasanian period (224 to 651 CE) and they evolved through different eras until the Safavid dynasty (1501–1732) when the last generation of Persian domes were characterized by a distinctive bulbous profile and astonishing tileworks.

In the Persian urban designing, domes in places of worship and public places, including traditional bazaars, caravansaries, schools and baths, are designed in such a way that can be seen from different parts of urban or rural area.

The domes are normally double-shelled. While the interior shell is designed to carry the weight of the structure, the exterior shell serves as both a decorative element and as insulation against the elements. The aerodynamic shape of the domes also makes the structures more sustainable.

### ■ Symmetry

Iranian architecture makes use of abundant symbolic geometry, using pure forms such as the circle and square, and plans are based on often symmetrical layouts featuring rectangular courtyards and halls.

Sassanid architecture is decorated with carved stone

or stucco reliefs and makes use of colorful stone mosaics. Beautiful gold and silver dishes, bowls, and ewers, often decorated with hunting scenes or animals in high relief, and textiles with symmetrical heraldic designs also remain.

### ■ Usage of Muqarnas

Muqarnas is typically applied to the undersides of domes, pendentives, cornices, squinches, arches, and vaults and is often seen in the mihrab of a mosque. They can be entirely ornamental, or serve as load-bearing structures. The earliest forms of muqarnas domes, found in the Mesopotamian region, were primarily structural.

### ■ Calligraphy

– Iranians’ passion for using the script as an artistic impression goes back to pre-Islamic times but it is the work of Islamic era calligraphers and illuminators that elevated its use into the high art we appreciate today. Encouraged by the Islamic preference for the art of calligraphy over representational arts, it developed from epoch to epoch and from style to style.

## Spaniards’ new travel trends: more trips abroad, fewer at home

Despite the overall drop in holidaymakers during the third quarter of last year, tourist spending continued to rise from the same period in 2018

Spaniards traveled less in the summer of 2019 than they did the previous year, with a significant drop in domestic tourism that a rise in foreign trips failed to balance out. That’s according to the Familitur survey carried out by Spain’s National Statistics Office (INE), which focused on the third quarter of 2019. Despite this reduced travel, spending rose by 1.9%, with almost €19.3 billion spent overall.

According to the data, Spaniards undertook 61.11 million trips in the third quarter of the year, which includes summer vacations. This is 5.4% down compared to the same period of 2018. According to the findings, the drop is

exclusively due to the fall in domestic travel, with 53.84 million trips taken within the country – 6.4% less than in 2018.

Meanwhile, trips abroad increased by 3.2% to 7.27 million. Taking the entire year into account, the same pattern emerges: trips undertaken by Spaniards fell overall by 1.7% due to the 2.6% fall in domestic travel, which the 7% rise in trips abroad failed to make up for.

Although Spaniards traveled less, they spent longer stretches of time in domestic destinations between July and September, with an average of 5.8 nights, 5.9% longer than in the same period in 2018. On the other hand, while there was more foreign travel, the length of stay was 8.7% shorter with an average of 9.3 nights.

### ■ Fewer trips to Catalonia

Andalusia was the favored domestic destination, accounting for 18% of the total number of trips: 10.98 million, which is 2% less than 2018. This was followed by the Valencia region with 12.3% of the total: 7.51 million, which is 0.69% more than in 2018. And the third destination was Catalonia, which accounted for 11.7%, indicating that the region has lost more than a million Spanish holidaymakers compared to 2018, when it accounted for 8.27 million trips as opposed to 7.14 million in 2019, a drop of 13.7%. The money spent by domestic tourists in Catalonia fell by 3.6% to €1.5 billion.

Cantabria was the region that accounted for most domestic tourism with respect to the size of its own population, with 2,559

trips made for every 1,000 of its own inhabitants. It was followed by Castilla y León with 2,087 trips, and Asturias with 1,611 for every 1,000 inhabitants. Meanwhile, Madrid’s took the most trips with 1,860 for every 1,000 inhabitants, followed by residents of Aragón (1,559) and the Basque Country (1,363).

The money spent by Spaniards on domestic tourism rose more than what they spent abroad, with an increase of 2.1% (for a total of €12.7 billion) on domestic travel and a rise of 1.4% (€6.5 billion) abroad.

Spaniards traveling within Spain spent an average of €237 per trip, the equivalent of €41 per day. Meanwhile, Spaniards traveling abroad spent an average of €97 a day, averaging €898 per trip.

*(Source: El Pais)*

## Precheck, Global Entry or Clear? How to get through airport lines faster

By Geoffrey Morrison

Spend less time in line and more time, well, anywhere other than the airport, with these apps and government programs.

I love flying, but I hate airports. Specifically, I hate the endless lines. Lines to check in, lines for security, lines for passport control, and then at the other end, lines for your luggage, more lines for passport control and, if you’re really lucky, lines for taxis or buses to get you away.

Some of these lines are unavoidable. Other lines can be shortened or skipped by just about anyone. Anyone who wants to pay up front with a bit of money and time, that is. Here’s a look at the options.

### ■ TSA PreCheck

TSA PreCheck is a program run by the Transportation Security Administration that lets travelers departing from airports in the United States access a separate — and usually much shorter — line through airport security. Generally you’ll get a simplified security screening as well, letting you leave the laptops and liquids in your bag, and keep on your shoes, belt, jacket and other articles of clothing. PreCheck lines are available at more than 200 airports and with over 70 airlines, including nine new airlines this year. According to TSA PreCheck, in August 2019, 93 percent of the program’s passengers waited less than five minutes. To be approved for PreCheck, the first step is to complete an online form that includes questions about your physical appearance and criminal history. Then you schedule and complete a 10-minute, in-person interview with a TSA official that includes fingerprinting, a photograph and background check, at one of several hundred enrollment centers all over the country.

Most people are approved a few days after their appointment, notified in writing within two or three weeks, or online. You’ll receive a Known Traveler Number, which you add to any frequent flier profiles you have, or include in any reservation with a participating airline. Your ticket will then indicate you have PreCheck, and let you access the special security lane. If you’re traveling with children under 12, they can go with you in the special lane. Children 13 and over will need to apply for their own PreCheck and Known Traveler Number.

Though PreCheck typically costs \$85 for five years,



several credit cards include the fee as one of their perks. Wirecutter, a New York Times company that reviews products and services, has a list of the best travel cards that include TSA PreCheck.

You can renew for an additional five years and \$85, and most people can do so online. Some might be asked for an additional in-person interview.

If you live near the Canadian or Mexican border, and cross frequently, consider getting NEXUS or SENTRI. These are programs with United States Customs and Border Protection that speed crossings at those borders, plus they get you TSA PreCheck when you fly anywhere.

### ■ Global Entry

Global Entry is a program run by the United States Customs and Border Protection agency. Just like TSA PreCheck, access to the program allows you to skip the long line at security when you’re departing the United States. Additionally, it speeds you through passport control when you arrive back at an American airport from overseas. At passport control you get to skip the long line, skip the paperwork and instead answer a few questions at a computer kiosk. Then a Customs and Border Protection agent double checks you’re you, and you’re on your way. Global Entry is even available at a handful of airports outside the United States, like those in Abu Dhabi and Dublin, along with land and seaports of entry, like San Ysidro in California and Port Everglades in Florida. So while PreCheck only saves time when you’re departing, Global Entry helps when you’re departing and when you’re arriving.

Getting Global Entry is similar to the process of getting PreCheck. There’s an online form, then an in-person interview with a C.B.P. agent, during which you’ll be asked why

you want to be a part of the program, your employment history, any criminal history, and what countries you’ve visited recently. You’ll be photographed and fingerprinted. There’s no minimum age, though anyone under 18 will need their parent or legal guardian present at the interview. Only those with Global Entry can use the Global Entry kiosks. Any family member, including children, who don’t have it, will have to use the normal line.

The \$100 fee will get you five years of Global Entry, and is covered by many travel credit cards. Since it includes TSA PreCheck for only \$15 more than that service, this is an easy choice for even occasional international travelers. You also get a credit card-size Global Entry ID card which lets you use SENTRI and NEXUS lanes when crossing the border into the United States from Canada and Mexico.

If Global Entry seems great, you’re not the only one who thinks so. The program is currently quite backlogged, and it might take weeks, sometimes months, to get approved. If you get conditionally approved and there are long wait times for the interview at your closest enrollment center, you might be able to enroll on arrival at certain airports.

### ■ Clear

Clear is a privately run company that uses biometrics like your fingerprints and eyeballs to verify that you’re you. This, Clear claims, speeds access through security lines at more than 60 airports and sports and event stadiums across the country. Once you sign up, you just find the Clear kiosk, and once it verifies you, you get brought to the front of the security line.

Clear only lets you cut the initial ID-check line, though. You still need to pass through security like the rest of us plebes. So to speed up the actual security process, you’d need TSA PreCheck/Global Entry on top of Clear, which isn’t included. At \$179 per year, that seems a lot of money for just a few minutes of a few trips per year. Additional adults added to your account, either friends or family, are \$50 each per year, but children under 18 can go with you through the Clear lane for free. If you know the airports you regularly use have Clear and long lines, this could be worth it. Not for most people, though. It’s worth checking to see if your airline’s frequent flier program offers a discount. Many do.

*(Source: The New York Times)*



# WORLD WAR III? Has Trump lost his mind?

By Robert David Steele

**TEHRAN** — Robert David Steele, a former Marine Corps infantry officer and CIA spy as well as an activist for Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE), contributes regularly to Tehran Times.

It has been my duty – and my honor – to work with such stellar strategic intellectuals as Col Doug Macgregor, himself a candidate for both Secretary of Defense and National Security Advisor positions during the first Trump Administration, and to be a loyal supporter and admirer of General Michael Flynn, Trump's first National Security Advisor who was framed by the FBI and the Zionists to remove him from the White House. My observations below are informed by my past as a CIA spy and creator of the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA), and by my non-fiction reading including hundreds of books on the corrupt, dysfunctional, and even treasonous US national security personalities and institutions.

Here are my conclusions:

01 Israel has been trying desperately to force a war with Iran, partly to save war-criminal Benjamin Netanyahu and partly to continue its long standing strategy of destabilization to divide and conquer the Middle East.

02 The primary war-mongering within Iraq is being done by Israel and the Kurds, with the US forces more like a supporting clown show.

03 The "campers" at the US Embassy, thankfully dispersed now, were intended to deceive President Trump into thinking that an Embassy take-over was imminent, similar to that which occurred in Iran under President Carter. Several of us helped end that theatrical show.

04 If Trump did approve this assassination, he was deceived into thinking it was the equivalent of a Bin Laden assassination (never mind that Bin Laden – and ISIS – were both created by the Zionists and the CIA with Pentagon funding and equipment) and he was not told that the assassination of Major General Qassem Soleimani within Iraqi territory is right up there with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that was used as a casus belli for WWI.

05 Trump is surrounded by four pathological networks of liars: the US Army West Point Class of 1986 (Esper, Pompeo, Urban), Christian Zionists (Pompeo, others), Zionist agents (Kushners, both of them), and CIA Zionists (Brennan, Haspel, others). While his new National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien, is doing some spectacularly good work in eliminating Obama war-mongers and agents of foreign powers from the National Security Council, he may not have the nu-



anced grasp of history and current biographics needed to protect the President from these four networks of liars who favor war with Iran at any cost.

06 Both the US Mainstream Media (MSM) and social media (#GoogleGestapo) are committed to Zionist desires for war with Iran, and careful to cover up the true costs of our war in the Middle East including what are known as Fallujah Babies – the result of depleted uranium used in armor plating and armor-piercing projectiles.

07 A proportional response by Iran would not be a strike on US forces in the region, but rather the assassination, within the USA, of Mark Esper. I say this not to encourage such a reaction, but to make clear to all those who read this article that this is what the USA has done to Iran, while also violating Iraqi sovereignty in a manner worthy of the International Criminal Court.

Below is my letter to President Trump submitted to the White House comment line this morning at

0542 Eastern Time.

**■ TIME SENSITIVE WAR PREVENTIVE**  
Mr. President,

You have been schlonged by DoD and CIA and the US Army Class of 1986. The assassination of Major General Qassem Soleimani within Iraqi territory is right up there with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that was used as a casus belli for WWI.

If you actually gave this order, you need to consider the possibility that everyone that advised you to do so is an agent of influence for Zionist Israel, and fire them.

Right now you need to be thinking about damage control. You are NOT in control of the US Government (as JFK was told by Schlesinger when he was angry over the missiles not being pulled from Turkey as he had ordered). Rule 1 in Washington according to Mort Halperin in Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy is "Lie to the President if you can get away with it."

Mike Flynn has a better grip on this stuff than your current team. I earnestly urge you to determine if this

## A new year and a new Trump foreign policy blunder in Iraq

By Medea Benjamin & Nicolas J. S. Davies

**ANTIWAR** — It's a new year, and the U.S. has found a new enemy – an Iraqi militia called Kata'ib Hezbollah. How tragically predictable was that? So who or what is Kata'ib Hezbollah? Why are US forces attacking it? And where will this lead?

Kata'ib Hezbollah is one of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) that were recruited to fight the Islamic State after the Iraqi armed forces collapsed and Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, fell to IS in June 2014. The first six PMUs were formed by five Shiite militias that all received support from Iran, plus Muqtada al-Sadr's Iraqi nationalist Peace Company, the reincarnation of his anti-occupation Mahdi Army militia, which he had previously disbanded in 2008 under an agreement with the Iraqi government.

Kata'ib Hezbollah was one of those five original Shiite militias and it existed long before the fight against IS. It was a small Shiite group founded before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, and was part of the Iraqi Resistance throughout the US occupation. In 2011, it reportedly had 1,000 fighters, who were paid \$300 to \$500 per month, probably mainly funded by Iran. It fought fiercely until the last US occupation forces were withdrawn in December 2011, and claimed responsibility for a rocket attack that killed 5 US soldiers in Baghdad in June 2011. Since forming a PMU in 2014, its leader, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, has been the overall military commander of the PMUs, reporting directly to the National Security Adviser in the Prime Minister's office.

In the fight against IS, the PMUs proliferated quickly. Most political parties in Iraq responded to a fatwa by Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani to form and join these units by forming their own. At the peak of the war with IS, the PMUs comprised about 60 brigades with hundreds of thousands of Shia fighters, and even included up to 40,000 Sunni Iraqis.

In the context of the war against the Islamic State, the US and Iran have both provided a great deal of military support to the PMU and other Iraqi forces, and the Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga have also received support from Iran. Secretary of State John Kerry met with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif in New York in September 2014 to discuss the crisis, and US Ambassador Stuart Jones said in December 2014, "Let's face it, Iran is an important neighbor to Iraq. There has to be cooperation between Iran and Iraq. The Iranians are talking to the Iraqi security forces and we're talking to Iraqi security forces... We're relying on them to do the deconfliction."

US officials and corporate media are falsely painting Kata'ib Hezbollah and the PMUs as independent, renegade Iranian-

backed militias in Iraq but they are really an official part of the Iraq security forces. As a statement from the Iraqi prime minister's office made clear, the US airstrikes were an "American attack on the Iraqi armed forces." And these were not just any Iraqi military forces, but forces that have borne the brunt of some of the fiercest fighting against the Islamic State.

Open hostility between US forces and Kata'ib Hezbollah began six months ago, when the US allowed Israel to use US bases in Iraq and/or Syria to launch drone strikes against Kata'ib Hezbollah and other PMU forces in Iraq. There are conflicting reports on exactly where the Israeli drones were launched from, but the US had effective control of Iraqi airspace and was clearly complicit in the drone strikes. This led to a campaign by Shia cleric/politician Muqtada al-Sadr and other anti-occupation parties and politicians in the Iraqi National Assembly to once again call for the expulsion of US forces from Iraq, as they successfully did in 2011, and the US was forced to accept new restrictions on its use of Iraqi airspace.

Then, at the end of October, US bases and the Green Zone in Baghdad came under a new wave of rocket and mortar attacks.



While previous attacks were blamed on the Islamic State, the US blamed the new round of attacks on Kata'ib Hezbollah. After a sharp increase in rocket attacks on US bases in December, including one that killed a US military contractor on December 27, the Trump administration launched air strikes on December 29 that killed 25 members of Kata'ib Hezbollah and wounded 55. Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi called the strikes a violation of Iraqi sovereignty and declared three national days of mourning for the Iraqi

troops that US forces killed.

The US attacks also led to massive protests that besieged the US Embassy and former US occupation headquarters in the Green Zone in Baghdad. US forces at the embassy reportedly used tear gas and stun grenades against the protesters, leaving 62 militiamen and civilians wounded. After the siege, the Trump administration announced that it would send more troops to the Middle East. Approximately 750 troops are expected to be sent as a result of the embassy attack and another 3,000 could be deployed in the next few days.

The US retaliation was bound to inflame tensions with the Iraqi government and increase popular pressure to close US bases in Iraq. In fact, if Kata'ib Hezbollah is indeed responsible for the rocket and mortar attacks, this is probably exactly the chain of events they intended to provoke. Incensed at the Trump administration's blatant disregard for Iraqi sovereignty and worried about Iraq being dragged into a US proxy war with Iran that will spiral out of control, a broad swath of Iraqi political leaders are now calling for a withdrawal of US troops.

The US military presence in Iraq was reestablished in 2014 as part of the campaign

against the Islamic State, but that campaign has wound down substantially since the near destruction and reoccupation of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, in 2017. The number of attacks and terrorist incidents linked to the Islamic State in Iraq has declined steadily since then, from 239 in March 2018 to 51 in November 2019, according to Iraq researcher Joel Wing. Wing's data makes it clear that IS is a vastly diminished force in Iraq.

The real crisis facing Iraq is not a growing IS but the massive public protests, starting in



October, that have exposed the dysfunction of the Iraqi government itself. Months of street protests have forced Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi to submit his resignation – he is now simply acting as a caretaker pending new elections. Severe repression by government forces left over 400 protesters dead, but this has only fueled even greater public outrage.

These demonstrations are not just directed against individual Iraqi politicians or against Iranian influence in Iraq but against the entire post-2003 political regime established by the US occupation. Protesters blame the government's sectarianism, its corruption and the enduring foreign influence of both Iran and the US for the failure to invest Iraq's oil wealth in rebuilding Iraq and improving the lives of a new generation of young Iraqis.

The recent attack on Kata'ib Hezbollah has actually worked in favor of Iran, turning Iraqi public opinion and Iraqi leaders more solidly against the US military presence. So why has the US jeopardized what influence it still has in Iraq by launching airstrikes against Iraqi forces? And why is the US maintaining a reported 5,200 US troops in Iraq, at Al-Asad airbase in Anbar province and smaller bases across Iraq? It already has nearly 70,000 troops in other countries in the region, not least 13,000 in neighboring Kuwait, its largest permanent foreign base after Germany, Japan and South Korea.

While the Pentagon continues to insist that the US troop presence is solely to help Iraq fight ISIS, Trump himself has defined its mission as "also to watch over Iran." He told that to US servicemen in Iraq in a December 2018 Christmas visit and reiterated it in a February 2019 CBS interview. Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi has made clear that the US does not have permission to use Iraq as a base from which to confront Iran. Such a mission would be patently illegal under Iraq's 2005 constitution, drafted with the help of

the United States, which forbids using the country's territory to harm its neighbors.

Under the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement between the US and Iraq, US forces may only remain in Iraq at the "request and invitation" of the Iraqi government. If that invitation is withdrawn, they must leave, as they were forced to do in 2011. The US presence in Iraq is now almost universally unpopular, especially in the wake of US attacks on the very Iraqi armed forces they are supposedly there to support.

Trump's effort to blame Iran for this crisis is simply a ploy to divert attention from his own bungled policy. In reality, the blame for the present crisis should be placed squarely on the doorstep of the White House itself. The Trump administration's reckless decision to withdraw from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and revert to the US policy of threats and sanctions that never worked before is backfiring as badly as the rest of the world predicted it would, and Trump has only himself to blame for it – and maybe John Bolton.

So will 2020 be the year when Donald Trump is finally forced to fulfill his endless promises to bring US troops home from at least one of its endless wars and military occupations? Or will Trump's penchant for doubling down on brutal and counterproductive policies only lead us deeper into his pet quagmire of ever-escalating conflict with Iran, with the US's beleaguered forces in Iraq as pawns in yet another unwinnable war?

We hope that 2020 will be the year when the American public finally looks at the fateful choice between war and peace with 20/20 vision, and that we will start severely punishing Trump and every other US politician who opts for threats over diplomacy, coercion over cooperation and war over peace.

was a CIA drone or a DoD drone, and then very publicly fire both the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the CIA, transfer the CIA drones to DoD and terminate their use as assassination devices (most of their [alleged] successes are lies, you are being lied to).

I pray this message reaches you but have no faith that it will. I am doing my duty. To stop war with Iran, you need to fire Esper and Haspel and put Pompeo on a path out the door. PNG'ing the Israeli Ambassador would not hurt at all.

The West Point 1986 class is schlonging you. At the same time I believe that Gina Haspel is covering up for John Brennan and not cooperating fully in providing the available records on Brennan's "green phone" calls to and from the UK with MI-6 and GCHQ. Combine those with an NSA print-out of every unmasking as Bill Binney and I have recommended to the AG, and you have it all.

I am praying for you. Anyone who supported this insane strike and assassination is an enemy of the USA.

Semper Fidelis,  
Robert David Steele  
<https://robertdavidsteele.com>

At this most delicate time in the history of the Middle East, I reiterate my view that the restoration of Palestine to the Palestinians is inevitable; the withdrawal of US forces and the closure of US bases in the Middle East (and hopefully around the world) is inevitable; and the degree to which our President is a prisoner in the White House, being lied to by four pathological networks, can and should be considered by the leaders of Iran, Iraq, China, and Russia.

In my view, the best appropriate response at this time is for Iraq to insist that all US forces – and all US "diplomats" as well as contractors (including particularly Exxon employees) leave Iraq. Iraq should also work with Iran and Russia to expel Israeli forces from the Kurdish zone in Iraq.

Escalation of this matter serves the Zionists – no one else. Given our President's "capture" and our President's vulnerability to liars – to enemies of America within the White House – to traitors – I humbly and respectfully recommend prudence on the part of Iran, and decisive action on the part of Iraq. Expel all foreigners. Work with Russia to hunt down and kill any Israeli forces that remain behind. Put the Israeli heads on stakes in the public square of Baghdad. This assassination may have been carried out by the USA, but only in our capacity as "useful idiots" in service to the Zionists.

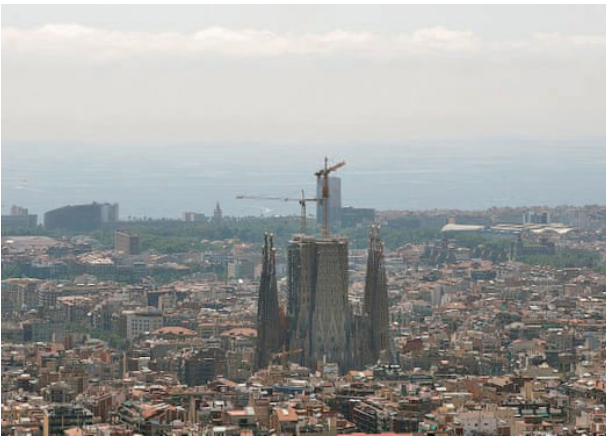
Let this be my contribution to peace this day.  
May God Bless each of us and may God have mercy on the souls of those who do great evil without understanding just how evil they have become.



## Barcelona to open southern Europe’s biggest low-emissions zone

The largest low-emissions zone in southern Europe opens in Barcelona on New Year’s Day, banning the most polluting vehicles from entering an urban area including the city and some satellite towns.

Petrol-driven cars bought before 2000 and diesels older than 2006 will be banned and face a fine of €100-€500 (£85-£425) each time they enter the zone. A moratorium will be in place for the first three months, during which time offenders will receive notification of the infraction but will not be fined.



Unlike a similar zone in central Madrid, the Barcelona ban covers the entire metropolitan area. In the Madrid zone, levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) fell by 48% in a year. Both cities frequently exceed World Health Organization levels for NO<sub>2</sub> and other pollutants.

The Barcelona zone covers 95 sq km – 20 times the size of the Madrid one – and encompasses four satellite towns in addition to the city area itself. It will be monitored by 150 cameras.

Janet Sanz, the deputy mayor in charge of mobility, said Barcelona hoped to reduce the number of cars in the city by 125,000 within three years, and air pollution by 20% within four.

If these targets were not met, Sanz said, Barcelona would consider introducing a London-style congestion charge for all vehicles entering the city.

“It’s about the democracy of public space and public health,” she said. “It’s a combination of reducing pollution but reconfiguring public space so that everyone can enjoy it.”

The low-emissions zone is designed to complement the city’s so-called superblocks scheme, in which areas made up of nine city blocks are closed to through traffic and partly pedestrianised.

There are currently six superblocks, with 11 more at various stages of completion. The plan envisages a total of 503 encompassing almost all the city.

Inevitably, the scheme has its opponents who argue it will affect business and force people to buy newer, cleaner vehicles. Sanz denies this, claiming it will encourage people to use the city’s excellent public transport system.

To this end the transport authority has introduced new tariffs, including a travel card offering unlimited journeys on public transport within the metropolitan area for €40 a month.

There will also be a one-year moratorium for owners of banned vehicles who can prove they earn less than €8,000 a year, and for delivery vehicles. All banned vehicles will be allowed to enter the city 10 times a year. ?

(Source: The Guardian)

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### UN Security Council and Iraq

(September 25, 2002)

UN Security Council diplomats say that they expect a preliminary new resolution on Iraq to come from Washington in the next few days. But nobody knows how firmly expressed the resolution will be. This report from Greg Barrow:

**The wheels of diplomacy** at the UN are slowly **grinding** towards the introduction of a new **resolution** on Iraq. London and Washington have been consulting closely on its content. Diplomats now say it’s most likely that the United States will **table** the **draft** in the next few days.

It may have arrived sooner if Security Council diplomats had not been distracted by the offers from the Iraqi government to give UN weapons inspectors **unconditional access** across the country. **Mixed messages** from the Iraqis about what unconditional access actually means have only served to confuse matters further and may have **prompted** an internal debate in Washington between the **hawks and doves** within the Bush administration over exactly how **robust** the new resolution should be. The overall effect has been to delay the progress of the resolutions through the council.

■ **Words**

**the wheels of diplomacy:** diplomatic efforts

**grinding:** moving

**resolution:** formal proposed plan of action which will be voted on

**table:** formally ask for a proposal to be discussed at a meeting

**draft:** an early version

**unconditional access:** the right to go into and see something without conditions or restrictions

**mixed messages:** different responses (from different people)

**prompted:** caused people to decide

**hawks and doves:** the aggressive and moderate members, respectively, of any group

**robust:** firmly expressed

(Source: BBC)



# Commuting seal and dolphins swimming farther south than ever, wildlife experts say

Wildlife experts have celebrated “extraordinary” sightings of Scottish bottlenose dolphins off the Yorkshire coast – thought to be the farthest south that they have ever been spotted on the UK’s east coast.

They have also discovered a seal “commuting” between the Isle of Man and Cornwall to have pups and search for food.

But the discoveries – among the success stories for UK marine life in 2019 – were marred by finding that a greater number of jet skiers, kayakers and boat-trippers, as well as drones, were causing the marine mammals to panic.

Plastics, litter and discarded fishing gear are also devastating seabirds and mammals, a conservation group found.

Volunteers from the Wildlife Trusts recorded 320 sightings of minke whales, bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoise off Yorkshire’s east coast in 2019.

It was the farthest south along Britain’s east coast that the dolphins from Scotland had been officially identified. Normally they are seen in the Moray Firth, off Cardigan Bay in Wales and the coasts of Cornwall, Northumberland and North Wales.

Bex Lynam, of the North Sea Wildlife Trusts, said: “It’s likely the bottlenose dolphins came south following shoals of fish; it’s thrilling to see playful dolphins and ocean giants like whales.

“Ten years ago, seeing a bottlenose dolphin off the Yorkshire coast would have been rare. We need to collect more data about how and why they are using these waters if we are to



better protect them.”

For the first time, a seal was discovered commuting between the Isle of Man and Cornwall. Photographs show the animal, nicknamed Tulip Belle, has been a regular visitor to the southwest since 2001, returning to the Isle of Man every couple of years to give birth.

Lara Howe, of Manx Wildlife Trust, said: “This is a first for us. We had no idea that they would go as far as Cornwall.

**Bottom of Form**

“When I sent our Manx seal photos to the Cornwall seal group, it was a bit of a

long shot and we were all surprised that we found a match. It shows that seals will swim great distances for food and a place to pup, highlighting the importance of a network of marine protected areas around the UK.”

Ms Lynam said warming seas from climate change meant species’ ranges were changing but in different ways.

Cumbria Wildlife Trust reported record numbers of grey seals at South Walney nature reserve: 483 including seven pups – up from 360 last year. Numbers have increased dramatically from only two in 1981.

## Shipping fuel regulation to cut sulphur levels comes into force

Sulphur will be cut drastically from global shipping transport fuels in 2020, in a move that should reduce some forms of air pollution, and may help towards tackling the climate emergency – but which could also lead to a rise in the price of flights.

From 1 January 2020, ships will only be allowed to use fuel oil with a very low sulphur content, under rules brought in by the International Maritime Organisation. This cut in sulphur content has been more than a decade in the planning, and almost all shipping around the world is expected to comply, or face penalties.

“Member states, the shipping industry and fuel oil suppliers have been working for the past three years to prepare for this major change – I am confident that the benefits will soon be felt and that implementation will be smooth,” said Kitack Lim, the secretary general of the IMO. “This [is a] hugely important change which will have significant positive benefits for human health and the environment.”

The new regulations are aimed at cleaning up sulphur emissions, which can cause acid rain and other forms of air pollution, rather than tackling the climate emergency. However, the dirty forms of fuel that contain high levels of sulphur are usually higher carbon too, and the costs of cleaning up sulphur may spur shipping companies to become more efficient in their fuel use, which would cut greenhouse gas emissions directly.

Moving to cleaner fuels could add substantially to costs, from an estimated \$400 (£303) a tonne for fuel oil today to as much as \$600 a tonne, according to the International Chamber of Shipping. Higher shipping costs may be absorbed throughout the manufacturing and transport supply chains.

The cost impact may also spread beyond shipping, according to the energy analyst firm Wood Mackenzie. “Knock-on effects from the cap on sulphur emissions in marine bunker fuel could even wind up giving you a more expensive plane ticket in 2020,” the company said.

The IMO estimates that the new limit – of 0.5% sulphur content compared with the previous limit of 3.5%, enforced under the international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships – will cut sulphur oxide emissions from



ships by 77%, an annual reduction of about 8.5m tonnes.

Fuel oil for shipping has long been one of the dirtiest forms of fossil fuel, made up of the sort of low-value and cheap crude oil that is unsuitable or expensive to refine into high-grade products such as petrol for cars, or kerosene for planes. Ship engines have been designed to cope with such low-grade fuel, and the emissions they belch out as a result mostly happen far from land, making the accompanying pollution less visible and, for many decades, largely ignored by governments.

But the damaging effects of the pollution have grown as globalisation has led to a massive increase in shipping transport. Shipping consumed about 3.8m tonnes of fuel oil a day in 2017, according to Wood Mackenzie, equivalent to half of global fuel oil demand. Carbon from shipping makes up about 3% of global total carbon emissions, but is expected to rise to 17% by mid-century. Fuel oil with a high sulphur content produces sulphur oxides, which can cause acid rain and particulate pollution.

Alternatives to low-grade, high-sulphur fuel oil are increasingly available, albeit at a higher price. Liquefied natural gas is still a fossil fuel, but much cleaner, and infrastructure allowing its use is becoming more widespread.

## ENGLISH IN USE

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A ◀ ▶ ع

### ‘Pharmaceutical industry unfazed by U.S. withdrawal of nuclear deal’

Given Iran’s low volume of imports in pharmaceutical and medical equipment industry, the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal won’t affect the industry, the Ministry of Health spokesman said on Wednesday.

“Due to the technical know-how we possess we do not depend on import and we are capable of manufacturing many pharmaceutical products domestically,” ISNA quoted Harirchi as saying.

Harirchi further highlighted that the country has enough foreign exchange reserves and ensured the public that the current conditions won’t raise any problems for the pharmaceutical industry.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “fore-”

- **Meaning:** before or in front
- **For example:** Can dreams *foretell* the future?

## PHRASAL VERB

### Go about something

- **Meaning:** to start to do something;
- **For example:** I want to learn German but I don’t know the best way to go about it.

## IDIOM

### Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed

- **Explanation:** a person who is very enthusiastic and full of energy
- **For example:** Gary was fantastic. He arrived bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at 7am and worked with us all day.

## سخنگوی وزارت بهداشت: خروج آمریکا از برجام تاثیری در دارو ندارد

سخنگوی وزارت بهداشت تاکید کرد: خروج آمریکا از برجام تاثیری بر بازار دارو و تجهیزات پزشکی نخواهد گذاشت؛ چراکه وابستگی مان به دارو و تجهیزات وارداتی بسیار اندک است.

دکتر ایرج حریرچی در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا گفت: با تکیه بر توان دانشمندان خودمان و تولیدات مان، وابستگی دارویی مان به محصولات خارجی بسیار اندک است و میزان قابل توجهی از داروها را خودمان تولید می کنیم. وی تاکید کرد: با توجه به توانی که دولت در حوزه ارز و منابعی که برای این حوزه دارد، مردم مطمئن باشند که مشکلی در این زمینه نخواهیم داشت.



# U.S. oil workers leaving Iraq after air strike

➔1

## ■ Israeli

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the US had the right to defend itself by killing Qassem Soleimani.

"Just as Israel has the right of self-defense, the United States has exactly the same right," Netanyahu said in a statement issued by his office on Friday.

"Qassem Soleimani is responsible for the death of American citizens and many other innocent people. He was planning more such attacks."

## ■ NATO

The NATO military alliance said it is monitoring the situation in Iraq closely with an eye on the safety of its training mission there.

"NATO is monitoring the situation in the region very closely. We remain in close and regular contact with the US authorities," spokesman Dylan White told AFP.

"At the request of the Iraqi government, NATO's training mission in the country is helping to strengthen the Iraqi forces and prevent the return of ISIS," he said.

"The safety of our personnel in Iraq is paramount. We continue to take all precautions necessary."

## ■ Germany

Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokes-



Hezbollah supporters carry pictures of Qassem Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and Mughnieh as a sheikh speaks in Ghazieh, Jan. 3, 2020. (The Daily Star/Mohammed Zaatar)

woman Ulrike Demmer urged restraint and de-escalation.

"We are at a dangerous point of escalation. It is now important through prudence and restraint to contribute to de-escalation," Demmer said.

## ■ Trump

Following the U.S. assassination of Iran's Quds Force chief, President

Donald Trump took to Twitter, issuing a quite cryptic message that Iran has "never won a war, but never lost a negotiation."

## ■ Bolton

John Bolton the former national security adviser in the Donald Trump administration took to Twitter to congratulate "all involved in eliminating

Qassem Soleimani," the commander of Iran's elite Quds Force.

"Hope this is the first step to regime change in Tehran," Bolton quipped.

The mustached cheerleader for any and all foreign interventions ever conceived in the U.S., Bolton has a long record of advocating a war with the Islamic Republic. He even wrote an opinion piece titled "To Stop Iran's Bomb, Bomb Iran" at the peak of Barack Obama's negotiations with Tehran on the now-scrapped nuclear deal.

## ■ Senator Rubio

U.S. Republican Senator Marco Rubio tweeted that Iran's "Quds Force chose the path of escalation".

"Facing repeated #IRGC attacks the U.S. & @potus exercised admirable restraint while setting clear red lines & the consequences for crossing them #Iran's Quds Force chose the path of escalation They are entirely to blame for bringing about the dangerous moment now before us."

## ■ Lindsey Graham

Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina tweeted today saying, "Very proud of @realDonaldTrump acting decisively in the face of threats to our embassy in Baghdad." Graham went further and, in another tweet, indirectly threatened Iran with a strike on its oil refineries.

(Source: agencies)

## Israel is systematically poisoning one million Palestinian children

We have now entered 2020, the year in which experts at the United Nations (UN) once predicted Gaza would become unlivable. But the sad reality is not only that those same experts said that Gaza was already unlivable in 2017, but that now the population of 2 million residing in Gaza are under the real threat of genocide.

Sara Roy of Harvard University's Centre for Middle Eastern studies, who is considered the leading scholar on Gaza's economy, has written that "innocent human beings, most of them young, are slowly being poisoned in Gaza by the water drink and likely by the soil in which they plant." So let us break down that statement, based upon the data available to us.

The population of the Gaza Strip is over 2 million strong, more than 50% of which are children (18 and under). Ninety-seven percent of Gaza's water is undrinkable with only the upper 10% of Gaza's population having access to clean water according to the UN. If we take these statistics and we look at them critically that would mean that according to conservative estimates only 40% of Gaza's children are consuming water that is fit for human consumption. This means that parents in the Gaza Strip are forced to make the decision to allow their children to drink contaminated water in order for them to survive.

Israel which has enforced its illegal blockade of Gaza since 2006 – although Zionist propagandists claim it started in June of 2007, which is incorrect – is under international

law required to provide Gaza with the ability to sustain itself. Gaza is not a State; it is not a sovereign territory in of itself. According to the UN Gaza constitutes part of what is called the Palestinian occupied territories, with the focus here being on the word "occupied."

According to the 4th Geneva Convention, Israel is required under International Law to provide the ability for Gaza and the West Bank to sustain an environment of livability. Israel will argue, however, that Gaza specifically is not occupied; that it withdrew in 2005. However it still controls the population registry, the entries and exits, all imports and exports, the electromagnetic sphere, the armistice lines (what Israel calls the border), the territorial waters, airspace as well as having a monopoly on the electricity in Gaza. Israel controls Gaza through and through; meaning that if Israel does not declare an occupation, it is a de facto annexation of the territory.

In excess of 108,000 cubic meters of untreated sewage water flows into the Mediterranean Sea from Gaza. This is due to a lack of power for Gaza's desalination plant and the lack of building material required to expand, both of which are due to Israel's policies towards the besieged coastal enclave. The situation is so bad that not only is Gaza's sea water heavily contaminated, leading to deaths as recently as last year, but also Israel's Ashkelon (Ashkelon) based desalination plant periodically halts operations due to the pollution, showing that Israel is willing to put the



purification of 20% of its own water at jeopardy in order to punish the Gaza Strip.

Rising from the problem of water contamination is also disease. Gidon Grumberg, the founder and director of Israel's 'Ecopace', told the Jerusalem post in 2016 that Gaza is a ticking time bomb for cholera and typhoid epidemics. Since then there have been repeated calls for a change to be made to Gaza's lack of clean water by various experts. If a change is not made in 2020 then Gaza could become a hotbed for disease the way that Yemen has, again due to an illegally imposed blockade.

(Source: Press TV)

## Turkey's parliament approves military deployment to Libya

Turkey's parliament has approved a bill to deploy troops to Libya in support of the embattled United Nations-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA), paving the way for increased military cooperation despite criticism from opposition legislators.

Parliament Speaker Mustafa Sentop said on Thursday that the legislation passed with a 325-184 vote.

The government has not revealed details about the possible Turkish deployment.

The motion allows the government to decide on the scope, amount and timing of any mission.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling AK Party and its allies hold a parliamentary majority. All important opposition parties in the assembly voted against the bill.

Parliament cut short its winter recess to address developments in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, where GNA-aligned forces

are countering a renewed push by eastern-based, renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar to wrest control of the city.

Following the announcement, US President Donald Trump warned Erdogan against any "interference" in Libya in a telephone call.

Trump "pointed out that foreign interference is complicating the situation in Libya," White House spokesman Hogan Gidley said in a statement.

GNA Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj and President Erdogan in November signed two agreements relating to maritime border demarcation and enhanced security cooperation.

Al Jazeera's Mohammed Adow, reporting from Ankara, said: "The governing party has the numbers to have sail the motion through."

"There was strong opposition from the

members of parliament, particularly from the main opposition party - the CHP, which had argued that Turkey should not get sucked into a murky quagmire."

## ■ Libya in turmoil

Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) launched an offensive in April, but their advances were brought to a standstill by pro-government troops along the city's southern outskirts.

However, the reported introduction of Russian mercenaries from the private Wagner group in September upended the balance of power and allowed LNA troops to seize control of key towns south of Tripoli.

Alongside an increase in the number of UAE air raids in support of Haftar, the Russian developments seem to have emboldened Erdogan and hastened Turkey's intervention, which in the past was limited to the sale of military equipment.

"It wouldn't be right for us to remain silent against all of this," Erdogan said in December, referring to the presence of Russian fighters.

Since longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown in 2011, Libya has not had a stable government.

Efforts to demobilise and reintegrate fighters who had helped topple Gaddafi into the formal security apparatus have largely failed.

Instead, the GNA has had to rely on a number of militias to defend the city.

But aside from their opposition to Haftar, analysts say authorities and the armed groups share few interests.

Haftar, who enjoys the support of a rival administration in the east, says he wants to restore order in the war-torn country.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Number of homicides in London climbs to 10-year high

The number of homicides in London has hit a 10-year high and there has been a surge in knife and gang-related killings since 2014, figures show.

The Metropolitan police recorded 149 homicides in 2019 up to 30 December. In five years the homicide rate has increased by more than 50%, from 94 cases in 2014.

Despite the introduction of a raft of measures to tackle the problem, the 2019 total was up 10% on the 135 homicides recorded in 2018, and the rise was concentrated in the poorest areas.

Figures for the rest of the country are not yet available but the second biggest force, West Midlands police, reported a fall from 51 murders in 2018 to 39 in 2019. Of those 39, 19 were stabbings and three were shootings.

Greater Manchester police, the third biggest force in England and Wales, said it could not provide homicide statistics.

Figures from the Mayor of London's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) reveal longer-term trends in the capital. Shooting deaths in London totaled four in 2014, rose to 15 in 2018 and fell back to 12 in 2019.

Fatal stabbings numbered 55 in 2014 and have gone steadily up, reaching 90 in 2019, according to Met figures.

Thirty-nine people aged under 25 were killed in 2014, 66 in 2017 and 46 last year.

Killings linked to gang violence have more than doubled in the last five years, from 17 in 2014 to 44 in 2018 and 42 in 2019.

The youngest victim of gang-related drug violence this year was Jaden Moodie, 14, stabbed nine times by a member of a rival drug gang in east London in January.

Ben Bradford, a professor of global city policing at University College London, who is working with the Met and MOPAC, said drugs, austerity and a rise in violence in youth cultures were key factors.

"The top two or three explanations have something to do with [firstly] trends in the drugs market – there has been an increase in competition. There is definitely something going on around 10 years of austerity. It can't be a coincidence that the generation of boys who were eight, nine or 10 in 2010 is coming to fruition after cuts," Bradford said.

"There is a group of young people who are just more ready to use knives than they would've been in the past. There is anecdotal evidence of people carrying to protect themselves. We need to look at the demographic of the

individuals and the areas they come from. It is telling that certain parts of London, certain neighborhoods, have been more prone to violence. They are poor, neglected and left behind."

London disproportionately shapes the national debate about crime. As violent crime increased, law and order increased in importance for voters, with the Conservatives promising to halt and then reverse the big cuts they inflicted on police numbers and budgets. Furthermore, as youth services were cut, school exclusions increased.

Bradford also pointed to the increasing number of young males – the group most likely to offend – in London. "The population of London is very young. There is a bulge, an increase, in the young population."

Bradford added: "The problems we are talking about do not have a policing solution. Policing is quite good at keeping the lid on problems, but it can't provide long-term solutions. That lies with health, education and social services and they have to provide the long-term solutions."

Numbers from MOPAC shows a peak of 216 homicides in 2003. Since 2008 the figure has not risen above 155 in a calendar year.

(Source: The Guardian)

## Greece, Israel and Cyprus call Turkey's planned Libya deployment 'dangerous escalation'

Turkey's bill allowing troop deployment in Libya marks a dangerous escalation in the North African country's civil war and severely threatens stability in the region, a joint statement by Greece, Israel and Cyprus said late on Thursday.

"This decision constitutes a gross violation of the UNSC resolution...imposing an arms embargo in Libya and seriously undermines the international community's efforts to find a peaceful, political solution to the Libyan conflict," Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades said in the statement.

Turkish parliament overwhelmingly approved a bill that allows troops to be deployed in Libya, in a move that paves the way for further military cooperation between Ankara and Tripoli but is unlikely to put boots on the ground immediately.

Turkey's move comes after Ankara and the internationally recognized government of Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj signed two separate agreements in November: one on security and military cooperation and another on maritime boundaries in the eastern Mediterranean, infuriating Greece, Israel, Egypt and Cyprus.

The three countries also called on Turkey to refrain from sending troops to Libya, which would violate Libyan national sovereignty and independence.

(Source: Reuters)

## Nassrallah: Lebanon's Hezbollah will continue Soleimani's path

Lebanon's Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said on Friday that the Hezbollah would continue the path of Iran's Major-General Qassem Soleimani after his death in a U.S. airstrike in Iraq.

Nasrallah said the United States would not be able to achieve its goals with this "big crime" and just punishment was the responsibility of all fighters, Al Manar reported.



## Iranians hold rallies, urging revenge for Soleimani assassination

➔1 The protesters expressed solidarity with General Soleimani's family.

In capital Tehran, tens of thousands of people attending the Friday prayers, held a rally after the event, carrying signs that warned the United States, Israel and their regional allies of harsh consequences, Press TV reported.

Addressing worshippers in Tehran, Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami warned the attack means "Americans around the world will never experience calm again."

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei released a message on Friday, saying Iran will take "tough revenge" on the criminals who killed the top Iranian general.

Thousands of people gathered at General Soleimani's house in Kerman, where he used to hold annual mourning ceremonies for Shia Imams on their martyrdom anniversaries.

## Soleimani was a "culture" and a culture cannot be assassinated

➔1 The terrorist and belligerent American and Zionist officials must know that the Iranian nation is not afraid of death and will continue fighting against oppression, aggression and murder more seriously until the day that peace is established and there is no criminal in the world.

That is the day that the great God has promised to all the oppressed of the world, and it will certainly not be late.

## Aoun hopes new gov't will be formed next week

Lebanese President Michel Aoun said in a statement on Friday that he hoped a new government would be formed next week.

Aoun said work was underway to form a government of specialists that could resolve ongoing issues in the country and restore internal and external confidence.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister-designate Hassan Diab is striving to iron out remaining hitches over the representation of the Christian and Sunni sects in hope of announcing the formation of a new government this week, political sources said Thursday.

"After having solved the problems of the Shiite and Druze representation, Prime Minister-designate Diab is now concentrating on overcoming hurdles over the Sunni and Christian representation that are delaying the government formation," a political source familiar with the Cabinet formation efforts told The Daily Star.

"The representation of the Sunni sect is on its way to being resolved after Diab proposed an independent candidate, retired Judge Fawzi Adham, to assume the key Interior Ministry portfolio," the source said.

(Source: daily Star)



## Moldova anthem gaffe mars ATP Cup in Australia

ATP Cup organisers were left red-faced on Friday by playing the wrong national anthem for a player from Moldova, a small landlocked country in eastern Europe.

The embarrassing gaffe occurred ahead of the opening singles tie in Sydney of the heavily-promoted new team event as Moldova's Alexander Cozbinov faced Belgium's Steve Darcis.

Tournament officials told AFP the Romanian anthem was played instead.

"At the start of the Moldova v Belgium match we mistakenly played the wrong national anthem for Moldova," the ATP admitted.

"We are sincerely sorry and have apologised personally to Team Moldova."

Cozbinov, who lost in three tough sets, played down the mishap "I think putting on the wrong anthem for us is not a big deal. But it wasn't that hard to pick the right anthem," he told AFP.

"Moldova and Romania have the same flag so probably that's why they made a mistake. Hopefully next time it's going to be the right one."

His opponent Darcis said he was not aware of the mistake at the time. "I didn't know. I was just surprised that they were not so much into it," he said. "I believe it's bad."

Moldova, bordered by Romania and Ukraine, was one of the last countries to qualify for the inaugural team event being played in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

They are spearheaded by world number 46 Radu Albot, who broke new ground in 2019 by becoming his country's first ATP Tour title winner at Delray Beach.

(Source: AFP)

## Ancelotti seeks perfection against Liverpool to end Everton's derby woes

Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti said his team must produce the perfect game in their FA Cup third round match at Liverpool on Sunday if they are to end two decades of disappointment in the Merseyside derby at Anfield.

Everton have not won at the venue since September 1999 and were hammered 5-2 in the Premier League this season, which led to Marco Silva's sacking as manager before Ancelotti took over last month.

Victory will also give Everton a first win over European and World champions Liverpool since 2010.

"A normal performance is not enough against them. Everything has to be perfect," Ancelotti, who masterminded a 2-0 Champions League win over Liverpool with former side Napoli in September, told reporters on Friday.

"No mistakes, hard work, sacrifice, intensity. To beat them, the game has to be complete... The best way to prepare is to be focused on what you do on the pitch. Be focused on the game. Don't look at different things.

"The last trophy Everton won was the FA Cup (in 1994-95) so we have to have confidence... Everyone knows how Liverpool play, fantastic in counter-attack... we have to attack well because you can't defend for 90 minutes and we don't want to."

Ancelotti is no stranger to derby matches having played for and managed AC Milan among other elite European clubs in a trophy-laden career.

"I know how different these games are. Of course, Liverpool are favorites but in a derby you never know what will happen," Ancelotti added.

"The fact that it's the oldest competition gives it a real special atmosphere. There are a lot of surprises. We're excited about the game."

(Source: Mirror)

## Ghana FA fires coaching staff of all national teams

Ghana's Football Association (GFA) has sacked the coaches of all their men's and women's national teams, the country's governing body has said.

The GFA did not give a reason for the move but its president Kurt Okraku, who was appointed in October, promised to "build a new association" following allegations of bribery and corruption in a documentary filmed by an investigative journalist.

It brings to an end Kwesi Appiah's second reign as the national team coach. He was appointed a second time in 2017 following a two-year stint between 2012-2014.

Under Appiah, Ghana failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup after playing in the three previous editions and were eliminated in the second round of the Africa Cup of Nations last year — their earliest exit since 2006.

"The Ghana Football Association has dissolved the technical teams of all national teams with immediate effect. The decision affects both male and female national teams," it said in a statement released late on Thursday.

"The GFA extends its appreciation to all coaches and members of the respective national teams for their contributions to our teams and Ghana football. We wish them all the best in their endeavors."

The country decided to dissolve its national football association in 2018 after a recording in the documentary appeared to show officials, including the body's then president Kwesi Nyantakyi, taking kickbacks. Nyantakyi, also a former member of FIFA's General Council, was later banned for life by FIFA.

(Source: Reuters)

## Rooney makes winning debut with Derby

Wayne Rooney enjoyed a winning debut with Derby as the former Manchester United star helped his Championship side to a 2-1 win against Barnsley on Thursday.

Rooney was named Derby captain for his first appearance since agreeing to join the second tier club back in August.

United and England's record goalscorer had been training, coaching and sitting in the dugout at Derby matches for several weeks, but Thursday was the first time he had been eligible to play following his departure from Major League Soccer side DC United.

The 34-year-old, included at the expense of the suspended Krystian Bielik in the only change made by Derby boss Phillip Cocu, played the full match, despite it being his first competitive game since October.

He set up the opening goal for Jack Marriott and was involved in Derby's second goal, providing a pin-point diagonal pass to Andre Wisdom, whose low cross was turned home by Martyn Waghorn.

Elliot Simoes had equalised for Barnsley, but struggling visitors couldn't ruin Rooney's return to English football.

Rooney's debut coincided with Cocu's team winning successive matches for the first time this season, but they remain 17th in the table.

Charlton began their new era under fresh ownership with a 1-0 defeat at Swansea.

(Source: Goal)

# Zidane: Failure isn't not winning a trophy in 2020, it's not trying

Real Madrid may not even have kicked a ball in 2020 but already expectations are high for a new year with new challenges and new trophies, but Zinedine Zidane is keen to manage those expectations.

The Frenchman was asked about whether not winning trophies would constitute a failure in 2020, but he made clear his disagreement.

"Failure is not trying, not giving our all, that would be a failure," Zidane responded.

"What's important is giving our all on the pitch and then we'll see."

"One team will win the league and another the Champions League, and the rest are stupid? I don't think so."

However, when asked to choose between the two, Zidane was equally as determined to avoid giving anything away.

"We know how difficult the Champions League is because of the rivals that are there, but in the league there are many games so I consider it to be very complicated to achieve," he added.

The first potential trophy of 2020 will be the Supercopa de Espana, but it is a competi-



tion, in Saudi Arabia, which Real Madrid will face without Eden Hazard.

"He's 100 percent ruled out of the Supercopa, he won't come and I hope that just afterwards he will come back slowly but surely," the Frenchman revealed.

As may be expected, he was also quizzed on transfer speculation but the coach was having none of it.

"I'm not saying anything, Paul [Pogba] is a player for another team and he's also injured so I hope he's back soon, I think

about the players I have," he said.

He was also asked about potential exits, with Mariano Diaz and Brahim Diaz both having been linked with loan moves away in search of regular game time.

"I don't think so, what's important is to talk to each player and it can be a problem if they aren't getting minutes, they try to train well and everything, until the 31st, lots of things can happen."

Another player who has been subject to some rumours is Isco, but Zidane confessed that he recognises a little of himself in the Spaniard.

"I feel identified with everyone but it's true that because of his position I feel a little more identified with him [Isco]," he admitted.

"He's playing and wants his place, but that's the same for everyone, everyone who has a chance to play has to perform and the players know that and I like Isco as a player."

Real Madrid start 2020 with a short trip to face Getafe in a challenging opening fixture against Jose Bordalas' team.

(Source: Marca)

## Ibrahimovic looking for 'last bit of adrenaline' at AC Milan



Swedish star Zlatan Ibrahimovic warned Friday he was not back at AC Milan as a mascot but for the "last bit of adrenaline" and to lift a club he loved out of a difficult situation.

"I'm not here as a mascot to dance for the fans next to the Devil (Milan mascot)," the 38-year-old told a press conference in Milan.

"I'm looking for the last bit of adrenaline I might have. At my age you're not looking for anything else but a challenge."

"When you're 38 and get hired by AC Milan it's something that doesn't happen very often, coming here means I still have something to give."

"I got more requests now than when I was 28," he continued.

"I am ready, I feel more than alive, I hope to play immediately."

Ibrahimovic has signed a six-month contract worth 3.5 million euros (\$3.9 million) with the option for an additional year.

It will mark the Swede's second stint with Milan, seven years after he left for Paris Saint-Germain.

He played for the Rossoneri from 2010-2012 scoring 56 goals in 85 appearances and helped the club win their 18th and last league title in 2011.

One of the most successful clubs in the world the seven-times European champions are 11th in the table just seven points above relegation.

Milan chief football officer Zvonimir Boban contacted the Swede after he left Los Angeles Galaxy in October and the calls intensified after a 5-0 loss to Atalanta last month, their heaviest defeat in 21 years.

"After Atalanta I got lots and lots of calls,

it wasn't a difficult decision in the end," continued Ibrahimovic.

"Last time I left Milan I didn't want to leave. Milan gave me the happiness of playing soccer, I hope this will be true again."

"Things need to be improved in the field and that's why I'm here."

"Milan is always AC Milan and the image of ACM it's something that cannot be deleted, you can't change history."

Ibrahimovic said that going to the United States after his career-threatening knee injury at Manchester United had refueled his passion.

"After two MLS championships I feel more than lively," he said.

"It's not that I can play like when I was 28 or 35, things change but you know what you can do. Rather than running you can kick a ball from 40 meters," he smiled.

Ibrahimovic started his career at Malmo in his native Sweden.

He went on to play for Ajax, Juventus, Inter, Barcelona, Milan, PSG and Manchester United, winning trophies with all these clubs.

But Boban warned that the club would not just be counting on Ibrahimovic.

"We can't forget the horrible and unacceptable defeat at Bergamo, but we must not hide behind the broad shoulders of Zlatan Ibrahimovic," said Boban.

"We hope the course of the season will change and are optimistic about the effect he will have on the team and the environment but we need results."

AC Milan's first game after the winter break will be at home against Sampdoria on Monday.

(Source: AFP)

## Solskjaer plays down rumours of Paul Pogba row



Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer played down any suggestion of a disagreement over Paul Pogba's recent ankle surgery on Friday.

The Norwegian boss said on New Year's Day that Pogba's "people" had advised that the player, who has only started six matches in all competitions this season due to ankle problems, required surgery.

Speculation continues to surround the 26-year-old Frenchman, who has been regularly linked with a move away from Old Trafford and whose agent, Mino Raiola, has been scathing about the club in comments made in the Italian media.

Solskjaer sought to set the record straight on Friday regarding the World Cup winner, who joined United for a then world record £89 million (\$116 million) fee in 2016.

"Paul came back after a long spell out, (featured in) a few games, had a reaction, and didn't go to Burnley," he said ahead of his side's FA Cup third-round match against Wolves on Saturday.

"He felt his ankle was sore, we did a scan. It's not the same injury, it's a different injury, of course when you get that scan you (as a player) consult your own medical people as well, like I did. He wanted a second opinion and the advice was to have it done."

"It's not a major (injury) and probably, as I said, (he will be out) three or four weeks."

When asked again about why he had suggested it was Pogba's "people" behind the decision to undergo surgery, he added: "As in when you consult your surgeon and the ones you trust."

"That's maybe my bad English -- you have people you trust and you speak to."

When I had my injuries, knee operations, I had my people in Norway and Sweden that I spoke to and Paul obviously has people as well that he trusts, and that's important."

Pogba featured as a second-half substitute in the matches against Watford and Newcastle over the Christmas period and had been expected to feature against Burnley before his latest setback.

An injury to Scott McTominay on top of Pogba's problems has further limited Solskjaer's choices in midfield.

The Scot has suffered knee ligament damage, sidelining him for two months and placing extra pressure on Nemanja Matic and Fred in the center of the pitch.

Wolves were United's conquerors at the quarter-final stage of the FA Cup last season and Solskjaer predicts another tough assignment at Molineux on Saturday.

"We've had in succession Arsenal, Chelsea, Wolverhampton away and Wolverhampton away (in the FA Cup). Wolves are not going to make it easy for us," he said.

"It's my fourth time at Molineux and we haven't won yet. Liverpool lost there last season, (Manchester) City have just lost there so we have got to earn the right to win there. We've got to perform and go there positive."

Eighteen-year-old Mason Greenwood, who started and scored in the win at home to Newcastle last week and came off the bench at Arsenal, could be in contention.

Solskjaer also confirmed that reserve goalkeeper Sergio Romero would play at Molineux.

(Source: Eurosport)

## Alonso aims to make history as Dakar Rally heads to Saudi



### Alonso quest

Among the starters will be motorbikes, quad bikes and trucks but Alonso, who will have five-time bike champion Marc Coma navigating his Toyota, will be in the car category as he bids to become one of the greatest all-round drivers of all time.

Apart from his success in F1, the 38-year-old Spaniard has also won the Le Mans 24-

hour race and has singled out the Indianapolis 500 as his priority for 2020.

He describes Dakar as "the biggest challenge of my career".

Alonso is not the first F1 driver to take part in the race.

The Belgian Jacky Ickx, a winner of eight grand prix and six-time winner of Le Mans, won Dakar in 1983 and came second in 1986 and 1989. Frenchman Patrick Tambay, who had two wins in his 114 grand prix, came third in 1988 and 1989.

Given the treacherous conditions - long stretches of sand dunes - Alonso is not overly confident of challenging for victory, noting that even the nine-time world rally champion Sebastian Loeb was unable to deliver when he raced the Dakar.

Loeb won 13 stages but could only finish second in 2017 and third in 2019.

"If Loeb still hasn't won the Dakar, imagine me, who is coming from asphalt," Alonso told RTVE.

"I think the goal is more to approach the rally as an enriching experience for us."

(Source: France 24)



# Iran volleyball squad named for Asian Olympic Qualification Tournament

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran volleyball head coach Igor Kolakovic has named his 14-man for the AVC Men's Volleyball Olympic Qualification Tournament.

Team Mellis have been drawn in Pool A along with China, Chinese Taipei and Kazakhstan.

Pool B consists of Australia, Qatar, India and Korea.

Eight teams will strut their stuff in the Men's Tokyo Volleyball Qualification 2020 at Jiangmen Sports Center Gymnasium, China from Jan. 7 to 12, 2020 to vie for the top honor and the lone ticket for the Tokyo 2020.

Iran will start the campaign with a match against Chinese Taipei on Jan. 7 and meet Kazakhstan and China in the following days.

"We have an important tournament ahead and know that it will be difficult task because all participant teams will take part at the competition looking to book a berth at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics," Igor Kolakovic told the reporters.

"The year 2019 has been a busy calendar year for FIVB and we have little time for recovery," he added.

"We have a lot of faith in our team and are hopeful of winning a berth at the Olympics, that's why we are here. We have no choice but to win a place at Tokyo," the Montenegrin coach stated.

Iran will participate at the 2020 Men's Asian Olympic Qualification Tournament without warm-up games.

"We invited Tunisia, Egypt and Qatar to Iran but they didn't accept our invitation. France also said they will host us in January and it doesn't work," Kolakovic concluded.

## Squad:

Saeid Marouf, Milad Ebadipour, Morteza Sharifi, Pouria Fayazi, Shahram Mahmoudi, Ali Shafiei, Reza Abedini, Mohammad Mousavi, Aliasghar Mojarad, Javad Karimi, Pouria Yali, Mojtaba Mirzajanzpour, Mohammadreza Moazen and Mohammadreza Hazratpour



## Iran sporting events cancelled due to martyrdom of Ghasem Soleimani



**S P O R T S** **TEHEAN** — All sporting events in Iran scheduled for the next two days have been cancelled because of martyrdom of Commander of IRGC Quds Brigade, General Ghasem Soleimani.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has declared three days of public mourning in the country.

Iran's Ministry of Sport has announced that the all competition which are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday have been canceled.

Football Federation of the Islamic

Republic of Iran (FFIRI) and the Iranian clubs have also extended heartfelt condolences to the nation and said that the noble nation of Iran will not forsake the blood of its martyrs.

General Soleimani was at frontline positions in battles against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

General Soleimani and Deputy Commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (Hashd al-Shaabi) Abu Mahdi Al-Mohandes, who were separately leaving Baghdad airport in two cars were targeted and assassinated early hours of morning on Friday.

## Farhad Majidi replaces Stramaccioni in Esteghlal



**S P O R T S** **TEHEAN** — Esteghlal football team have turned to Farhad Majidi to salvage their season after the departure of Andrea Stramaccioni.

The Italian coach left Tehran in early December after Esteghlal failed to transfer his salary over the U.S. sanctions.

The Italian coach later received part of his unpaid salary after the representative of an Iranian bank gave him a check at Iran's Embassy in Rome, but he didn't return to Tehran and wasted the time.

On Thursday, Esteghlal announced that

they've ended their relationship with Stramaccioni after six months and have chosen Majidi as the new head coach of the club after hours of negotiations.

Esteghlal have a busy schedule in the coming months since the Blues have to play in AFC Champions League play-offs as well as Hazfi Cup and Iran league.

Majidi will be assisted by ex-Esteghlal midfielder Majid Namjoo Motlagh and a Spanish coach in Esteghlal.

The 43-year-old coach, who was appointed as replacement of Winfried Schäfer last season, has penned an 18-month deal with the Blues.

## Estili determined to end IR Iran's long Olympics wait

Islamic Republic of Iran coach Hamid Estili will seek to keep his players focused on the task at hand as they attempt to overcome the pressure of an expectant nation and secure a berth at the Olympic Games for the first time in 43 years in the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020.

Despite a record at senior level that marks them out amongst the leaders of the continental game, the Iranians travel to Thailand with their eyes fixed on securing one of the three tickets for the Tokyo Olympics.

The Central Asian nation has not qualified for the Olympiad since featuring in Munich in 1972 and Estili concedes that fact brings with it added scrutiny on him and his players.

"Well, this is a fact I cannot deny," he said of their Olympic football record. "We haven't made it to the Olympics despite having great names and stars in the squad in past editions."

"The fact that we haven't qualified in over 40 years puts extra pressure on us, but we've been doing our best to cope with that and have the players display their best performance."

"In fact, we want to start from scratch, we don't want to look back at what's happened before and we are staying focused on a step-by-step progress path."

The Iranians have a disappointing record at youth level that flies in the face of their status as one of the continent's most successful nations, having qualified for the FIFA World Cup Finals on five occasions, including the last two editions in Brazil and Russia.

But at Olympic level they have struggled while there has been limited success on the U16 and U19 stage, with the country's qualification for the FIFA U20 World Cup in



Korea Republic in 2017 a rare positive at age group level.

Many who represented the county at that tournament are eligible to feature at the AFC U23 Championship and Estili intends to lean on those players, as well as utilizing the talents of the man who led the squad to the Finals after reaching the semi-finals of the AFC U19 Championship in Bahrain in 2016.

"About 60 per cent of the current squad is composed of players who participated at the FIFA U20 World Cup in 2017," said Estili.

"We've got Amir Hossein Peirovani next to us as a coach, who led the same U20 team back then, so there's no doubt he

knows the players pretty well and can prove a huge help to us.

"Generally speaking, the experience gained internationally through participating in such tournaments is of great value to the team."

Estili himself has plenty of knowhow attained from playing on the biggest stages that he can pass on to his young charges, having not only represented his country at the FIFA World Cup in France in 1998 but famously scoring against the United States in the group phase of the competition.

The former Persepolis, Bahman and Geylang United midfielder knows, too, that his team face a stiff challenge to make the knockout rounds after being drawn to face China PR, Korea Republic and defending champions Uzbekistan in a demanding Group C. But he warned his team should not be underestimated.

"Once the names came out of the pots, I found out we're about to face tough rivals," he said. "But don't forget we are the mighty Iran, who are always a nemesis for any opponent across the continent."

"We've done a lot since the draws were made to get to know our rivals better. We've had friendlies to gear up for the tournament. We know every team in our group has hopes of qualification."

"Our initial goal is to finish the tournament in the top three. It's clear that first we need to book a berth at the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics. After achieving this, we'll have no goal but to win the trophy."

"Iran is a team that deserves to do well and we will make every effort to do so for the pride and honor of our country."

## Iranian sportspersons condemn 'U.S. assassination' of Qassem Soleimani

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iranian sportspersons have blasted the U.S. airstrike which martyred General Qassem Soleimani at Baghdad International Airport.



The Iranian athletes have noted that martyrdom of General Soleimani will bring more solidarity among the Iranian people and all the resilient people in the region.

Commander of IRGC Quds Brigade, General Soleimani, was martyred on Friday.

Iran's Ministry of Sport has announced that the all competition which are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday have been canceled.

General Soleimani was at frontline positions in battles against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

General Soleimani and Deputy Commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (Hashd al-Shaabi) Abu Mahdi Al-Mohandes, who were separately leaving Baghdad airport in two cars were targeted and assassinated early hours of morning on Friday.

## Sports Ministry extends sympathy on martyrdom of Qassem Soleimani

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Masoud Soltanifar, has extended the deepest sympathies to the Iranian people on martyrdom of Commander of IRGC Quds Brigade, General Qassem Soleimani.

The revered General and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), were martyred in US airstrikes in the Iraqi capital Baghdad early Friday.

Iran's Ministry of Sports has announced that all nationwide sporting events which are scheduled for the next two days (Saturday and Sunday) have been cancelled because of martyrdom of General Soleimani.

Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) and the Iranian clubs have also extended heartfelt condolences to the nation and said that the noble nation of Iran will not forsake the blood of its martyrs.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has declared three days of public mourning in the country.

## Gary Lineker reacts to Alireza Jahanbakhsh's stunning goal

Gary Lineker described Alireza Jahanbakhsh's equalizer as an early contender for goal of the decade after Chelsea FC was held to a 1-1 draw at Brighton on New Year's Day.

Spain international Cesar Azpilicueta made the breakthrough in the first half when he was quickest to the loose ball after Kurt Zouma's initial shot was blocked.

However, the Seagulls were level with four minutes left to play after Jahanbakhsh netted a sublime overhead kick to level the Premier League clash.

Lineker described Jahanbakhsh's goal as one of the contenders for goal of the decade after the Brighton star netted a superb equalizer.

The Match of The Day host wrote on Twitter: "We have actually genuinely seen one of the goals of the decade from Jahanbakhsh." (Source: The Sport Review)

## Zamanian joins Juventus

Iranian-French footballer Anahita Zamanian is the first signing of the decade of Juventus women football team.

The offensive midfielder joined the Bianconere after having spent last two years playing for Paris Saint-Germain.

He played for Swedish club Kopparbergs/Göteborg from 2016 to 2018, accumulating 34 appearances and four goals in the Damallsvenskan division, before joining PSG in 2018.

Zamanian has also featured in the French U-16, U-17 and U-20 national teams, where she represented France in the 2018 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup.

Now, after having spent time in Sweden and France, Zamanian's club career adventure will continue in Italy.

She will wear No.19 in Juventus.

(Source: Juventus.com)

## Nader Dastneshan shortlisted for Machine Sazi job

**TASNIM** — Nader Dastneshan has been nominated to replace Rasoul Khatibi in Iranian club Machine Sazi.

Khatibi stepped down from his role at the end of the Iran Professional League (IPL) midterm.

He announced his resignation due to financial problems.

Machine Sazi sit ninth in the IPL with 22 points, 12 points adrift leaders Persepolis.

Dastneshan has most recently coached Sepidrood Rasht.

## Iran's Faghani chosen to officiate at AFC U23 Championship

Iranian referee Alireza Faghani has been appointed for the upcoming AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020.

Iranian officials Mohammad Reza Abolfazli and Mohammad Reza Mansouri have been also appointed as assistant for the competition.

Each referee will be accompanied by two assistant referees, and receive support from

the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system, which is set to make its full tournament debut across all three cities in Thailand - Bangkok, Songkhla and Buriram.

The referees will be playing various roles throughout the tournament that includes VAR and Assistant VAR appointments.

The AFC U23 Championship Thailand

2020 kicks off on Wednesday, with Iraq taking on Australia, before hosts nation Thailand play debutants Bahrain. The final is scheduled for January 27.

On top of Continental triumph, the top three teams of the tournament will also secure qualification to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, joining hosts Japan in July.

(Source: the-afc)





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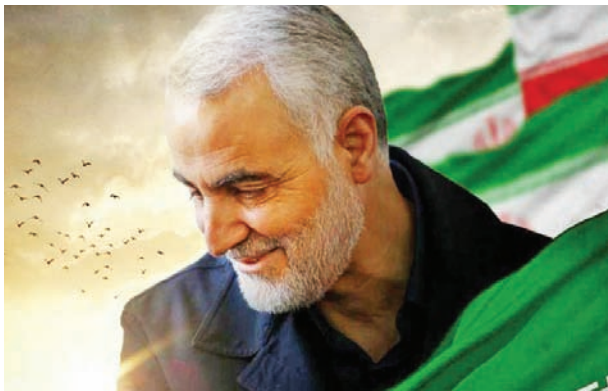


The best action is what you compel yourself to perform unwillingly.

Imam Ali (AS)

## Fajr Film Festival to honor resistance films with Qassem Soleimani award

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The Fajr Film Festival will honor films on resistance and jihad this year with an award named after Quds Force commander Major-General Qassem Soleimani who was martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad on Friday.



Quds Force commander Major-General Qassem Soleimani.

“Following the martyrdom of Major-General Qassem Soleimani, who is the legend of the justice advocates and those who are fighting oppression across the world, the Cinema Organization of Iran agreed to launch the Commander Qassem Soleimani Award in memory of the anti-oppression paradigm during the 38th edition of the Fajr Film Festival,” the organizers said in a statement.

The 38th Fajr Film Festival will take place in Tehran from February 1 to 11.

## Adaptation of “The Boy, the Soldier and the Sea” goes on stage in Tehran

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — A loose adaptation of French children’s writer Georges Fonvilliers’ book “The Boy, the Soldier and the Sea” (“L’Enfant, le Soldat et la Mer”) is currently on stage at the Mah Hall of Tehran’s Art Bureau.

Director Sina Delshadi has renamed the play “Father Dash Boy” to perform it in Iran.



Iranian troupe performs “Father Dash Boy” at the Mah Hall of Tehran’s Art Bureau on December 28, 2019. (Tiwall/Parichehr Zhian)

Written in 1964, “The Boy, the Soldier and the Sea” takes place in occupied France during World War II. In one of the French villages, a twelve-year-old boy, who has lost his father in the war, thinks that he is able to fight the German troops with his friends and other fighters.

Ali Abaqeri, Neda Habibi, Milad Hejazi, Amir-Ali Zarei and Farhan Farahnak are the main members of the cast for the play, which will remain on stage until January 12.

## Man charged after ‘Picasso painting’ attacked in London gallery

**LONDON (Reuters)** — British police have charged a man with criminal damage after a painting, reported by the BBC to have been by Spanish master Pablo Picasso, was attacked at a London gallery over the weekend.

The incident happened on Saturday at the Tate Modern gallery when Picasso’s 1944 painting “Bust of a Woman”, worth some 20 million pounds (\$26 million), was slashed the BBC said.

It said the work, which depicts Picasso’s lover Dora Maar and was painted in Paris in May 1944 during the final months of the Nazi occupation, was reported to have been ripped.

# Iranian celebs express sympathy over martyrdom of commander Qassem Soleimani

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian actors, filmmakers and singers have express sympathy over the martyrdom of Quds Force commander Major-General Qassem Soleimani who was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on Friday.

Ebrahim Hatamikia, the director of the war drama “Damascus Time” on the atrocities of the Daesh war in Syria, has sent a message of condolences.

“I warmly embraced him many times and I found myself thirstier at separation time,” Hatamikia wrote in a message published by Persian press media on Friday.

“Indeed, what decoration fitted him perfectly except the martyrdom honor? But, I ask permission from all martyrs to say that Hajji Qassem Soleimani needs no title for before and after his name. Hajji Qassem Soleimani means all the honorable titles. May his memory be eternal,” added Hatamikia who called himself Soleimani’s “small soldier”.

Hatamikia, who is most famous for his movies of 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, was praised by Soleimani for his 2018 movie “Damascus Time”.

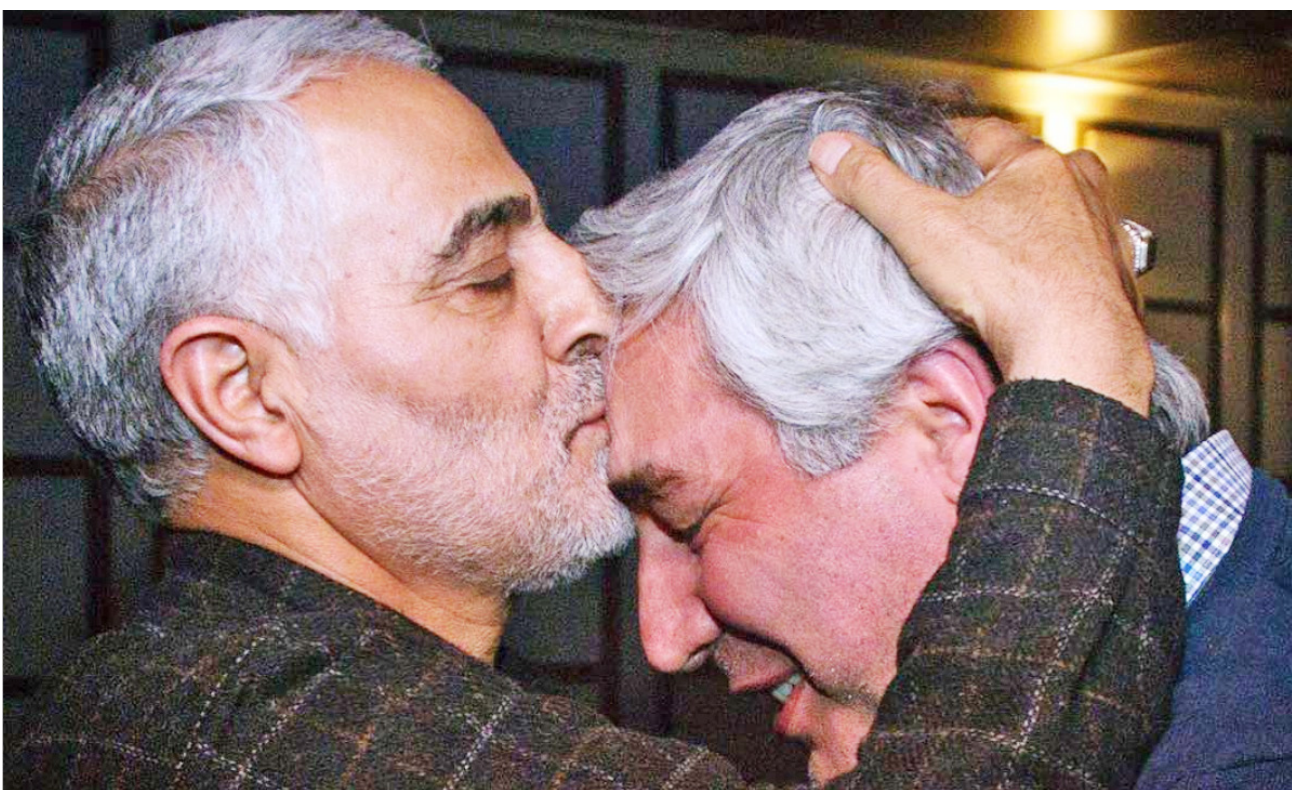
Soleimani had earlier honored Hatamikia in a meeting by granting one of the rings left from the Iranian soldiers killed in the fight against the Daesh terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

The film medium was highly regarded by Soleimani. In October 2018, he attended the launch of director Mehdi Jafari epic movie “The 23” about 23 young Iranian volunteers who were captives during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war on location in Tehran.

Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi also sent a message of condolences over the martyrdom of Soleimani.

“The drops of his pure blood will reinforce national unity and Islamic resistance,” he wrote.

The culture ministry canceled all plans for art exhibitions, concerts and theaters following Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei’s call for



Quds Force commander Major-General Qassem Soleimani kisses filmmaker Ebrahim Hatamikia in an undated photo.

three days of national mourning.

In addition, the 13th Celebration of Iranian Cinema Critics and Screenwriters, which was scheduled for Friday evening, was canceled.

A large number of Iranian actors and singers also showed reactions to the killing of Iranian general in posts published on Instagram.

“Undoubtedly, commander Soleimani’s martyrdom would not be in vain and his death will flash a bright light, which will strengthen the Islamic Iran,” wrote Iranian Oscar-nominated director Majid Majidi.

“There is a mystery in the universe that should be cleared up with blood,” wrote Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian, the director of the political thriller “Trace of Blood” and “The Middy Event”.

Actor Alireza Shojanuri wrote, “Nobody is pleased today except himself.”

“Your name brings concepts such justice and valor in my mind,” comedian Behnush Bakhtiari said.

“The great grief we felt over his death will alienate us from any unjust people,” actress Merila Zarei wrote.

“A man of politics who never sat at a desk, he was a man of action in the battlefield, happy your flying,” actress Leila Otadi.

Actor Amin Zendegani also wrote about the U.S. terrorist attack, “We were astonished by the stupidity of all these big idiots.”

Singer Reza Sadeqi wrote, “Baseness is always shameful, terror is always shameful, God bless you, o great man.”

“He always lived with the wish to be martyred and today, he was bestowed the great honor,” wrote singer Mohammad Motamedi.

## Ammar film festival opens in Tehran

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The 10th edition of the Ammar Popular Film Festival (APFF) opened during a ceremony at Tehran’s Andisheh Hall on Wednesday evening.

Winners of the sideline sections of the event were honored during the ceremony, which was attended by a number of cultural officials, artists and the families of the martyrs who lost their lives in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war or in fighting against terrorism.

Mohsen Enayati’s movie “Benjamin”, which is about a man named Benjamin who tries to save his mother from the king’s soldiers, received a Golden Lantern for best animated movie. “The Secret of Baba’s Pajamas”, co-directed by Hossein Jamshidi and Ali Taqvai, was named best short animated movie.

In the TV programs section, Golden Lantern was awarded



Javad Afshar (R), the director of the TV series “Gando” poses with an unidentified person after being honored during the 10th Ammar Popular Film Festival at Tehran’s Andisheh Hall on January 1, 2020.

## Masaji Ishikawa’s “A River in Darkness” published in Persian

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — “A River in Darkness: One Man’s Escape from North Korea”, Masaji Ishikawa’s harrowing true story of life in North Korea, has recently been published in Persian.

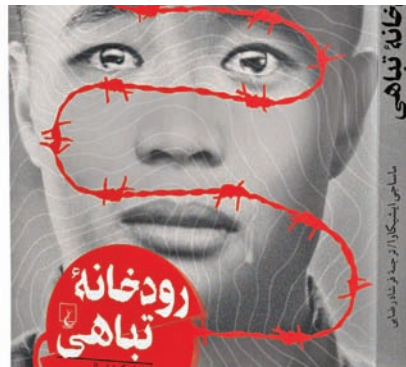
Published by Qoqun Publications, the book has been translated into Persian by Farshad Rezaei.

“Half-Korean, half-Japanese, Ishikawa has spent his whole life feeling like a man without a country. This feeling only deepened when his family moved from Japan to North Korea when Ishikawa was just thirteen years old, and unwittingly became members of the lowest social caste,” writes Amazon on its website about the book.

“His father, himself a Korean national, was lured to the new Communist country by promises of abundant work, education for his children, and a higher station in society. But the reality of their new life was far from utopian,” it adds.

“Ishikawa candidly recounts his tumultuous upbringing and the brutal thirty-six years he spent living under a crushing totalitarian regime, as well as the challenges he faced repatriating to Japan after barely escaping North Korea with his life,” it notes.

“A River in Darkness is not only a shocking portrait of life inside the country but a testament to the dignity—and indomitable nature—of the human spirit,” it concludes.



Front cover of the Persian translation of “A River in Darkness: One Man’s Escape from North” by Masaji Ishikawa.

## “Dervish” honored at 80th Intl. Photographic Salon in Japan

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian photographer Shakhavan Osmani’s photo “Dervish” has won the Judge’s Special Prize at the 80th International Photography Salon organized by Asahi Shimbun in Japan.

The photo shows several Iranian Kurds attending a ritual, which is organized every year in Uraman Takht, Kordestan Province, to commemorate the legendary Kurdish pious man Pir-e Shaliar.

Three more Iranian photographers were also honored at the contest, the organizers announced on December 29. The honorees are Hossein Yunesi for “Ball and Me”,



Photo: “Dervish” by Iranian photographer Shakhavan Osmani won the Judge’s Special Prize at the 80th International Photography Salon in Japan.

## Motivated by #MeToo? Vetting jurors in Weinstein case will be a challenge

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — As former movie mogul Harvey Weinstein goes to trial on rape charges next week in Manhattan, lawyers will need to keep an eye out for jurors who want to use the case to make a statement about sexual abuse following the rise of the #MeToo movement, legal experts said.

Once one of Hollywood’s most powerful producers, Weinstein, 67, has pleaded not guilty to charges of assaulting two women in New York, one in 2006 and the other in 2013.

In all, more than 80 women have accused Weinstein of sexual misconduct dating

back decades.

Those accusations helped fuel the #MeToo movement, in which hundreds of women have publicly accused powerful men in business, politics, the news media and entertainment of sexual harassment or assault. Weinstein has denied the allegations and said any sexual encounters were consensual.

Jury selection is expected to begin on Tuesday following a pretrial conference on Monday, according to Danny Frost, spokesman for Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance.

Selecting impartial jurors to decide

the fate of a celebrity whose alleged abuse fueled the #MeToo movement presents unique challenges, experts said, as potential jurors may try to mask their bias to advance a larger cause.

“They may think, ‘I want to be the one to make sure he goes to jail. I want to be the one to do justice,’” said Roy Futterman, a New York jury consultant.

On the other hand, Futterman said, people who believe that #MeToo has gone too far and ruined the lives of innocent men, may attempt to hide their bias so they can exonerate Weinstein.

Weinstein faces up to life in prison if convicted on the top counts, predatory sexual assault.

One of his lawyers, Donna Rotunno, said the defense team will be looking at potential jurors’ social media use and responses to jury selection questions, and said she is confident that will uncover biased candidates.

“Obviously this case has a lot more notoriety and press involved with it, but that’s a concern in any case,” Rotunno said in a phone interview. “Once 12 people are put on that bench and they realize the gravity of it, they really want to be fair.”